



Voice and Agency for Justice

- **Creating a more just country through student voice**
Yarraville West PS, Vic
- **Student on staff interview panel**
Asquith Girls HS, NSW
- **Student agency in an ethnically diverse school**
Catholic Regional College, St Albans, Vic
- **It's not OK to be away: student voices on attendance**
Francis Greenway HS, Maitland, NSW
- **A student-led session in Civics and Politics Education**
- **SAGA: Sexuality and Gender Alliance**
Swan Hill College, Vic
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How schools can improve student wellbeing
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Teach the Teacher Programs Officer

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Student voice and agency in the early years
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- Student Voice *facebook group*
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**Penultimate
issue!**

**Connect to cease publication
at end of 2021**

Connect

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Cover:

First Nations students painting Birrarung (Yarra River)
Photo from Yarraville West Primary School (see pages 3-7)

Why does Connect exist?

Connect is an independent practice journal,
published bimonthly since 1979!

It aims to:

- document student participation approaches and initiatives;
- support reflective practices;
- develop and share resources.

Connect:

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This (penultimate) issue:

Some important articles in this second last issue of *Connect* remind us that student voice, agency and participation, while essential, are not ends in themselves.



Almost 9 years ago, Michael Fielding asked in *Connect* 197 (October 2012: page 11):

What is all this activity for? Whose interests does it serve? Is student voice a neutral technology or an inevitable expression of a set of values and assumptions, not just about teaching and learning, but about the kind of society we wish to live in?

We read here about broad social objectives of justice, democracy, inclusion, equity and so on. These are those key values and assumptions – and they interact with, inform, and are informed by the processes of voice, agency and participation – for students, but also for all of us.

But this is not inevitable. Ideas about student voice, agency and participation can be co-opted, subverted and limited, and turned to serve ends of exclusion, inequity – and even injustice. It is possible to choose to listen to some voices and silence others; to conflate agency with sovereign selfishness; to pretend that student decision-making or consultation about token matters is sharing power.

While I've always believed that seriously listening to all students and respectfully sharing decision-making with them – in classrooms and schools – can open doors that can never be fully closed ... that disrupt our ways of thinking about student and adult roles and about the purposes of education ... I'm also aware that these processes and possibilities are fragile. A change of leadership, a pandemic, imposed requirements or demands can all limit, deflect or shatter processes.

Hopefully, articles in this issue also provide examples of hope and resilience in the face of such challenges. But we are also led to ask:

How far have we come since Connect first started sharing ideas, stories and resources late in 1979?

The next and last issue of *Connect* (#250) will be published in November. This final issue will look both backwards and forwards. So, I again invite you to start thinking and writing about the joint topics:

- How far have we come in the 42 years that *Connect* has been published? (Even if you've not been round for all of the 42 years, we want to hear from you!)
- Where should we be going in the next few years? And how? And who will take responsibility for sharing?
- What are some of today's promising practices?

It would be wonderful to publish a large set of responses – both shorter and longer reflections. Perhaps you can say something in 100 words. Or it might take you a little more. Please take this as a personal invitation to write: to share your ideas and perspectives. Your last chance to *Connect*.

If you have any queries about writing something, or if I can help in any way, please ask. I'm only too pleased to assist.

Roger Holdsworth

Next Issue: #250: November 2021
Deadline for material: end of October, 2021

Creating a more just country through student voice

'For too long, the truth of our history and Indigenous stories have been denied and whitewashed.' Dutton & Reid (2020)

How can **student voice** be enabled to ensure schools have a meaningful role in exploring the truth of Australian history and where First Nations perspectives are rightfully valued?

In this article, we would like to highlight the important role that students play in driving change by reflecting on the work students and teachers are doing at **Yarraville West Primary School** in Melbourne's inner west. The school has around 850 students, including seven First Nations students.

We believe that students are a great source of potential in evoking change, particularly when a culture of inquiry is promoted, and students are encouraged to express their own ideas, lead activities, and be a voice for change. **Indeed, it is young people themselves who are telling us they want schools to do more.**

Teachers have professional responsibilities to bring Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms. Yet, despite a range of educational policies, initiatives and standards that direct teachers to value Aboriginal histories,

cultures and languages, non-Indigenous teachers continue to feel tentative and reluctant to do this work. They often cite a fear of *'feeling ignorant'*, *'ill-equipped'* and often end up simply *'ticking the box'* (Bishop, 2020). This is not surprising, given that the education system they have experienced as students has been one that has perpetuated a legacy of colonisation through a white-washed curriculum, which has marginalised and discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In a recent conversation with pre-service teachers, we asked them to share practices that they had observed during placements, around foregrounding Aboriginal perspectives. It was disappointing that there wasn't one example that they could draw from. This obviously has devastating consequences for students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

backgrounds, who will continue to lack representation in the curriculum. It also means that there will be generations of non-Indigenous students who will grow up to become complicit in systems that perpetuate Indigenous disadvantage. The cost of inertia is too high.

So how do we move forward?

As non-Indigenous educators, we are interested in how students and teachers can work together to create cultural change in schools – one that fosters the teaching of truthful history and creates the conditions for a greater commitment towards a culturally receptive setting for Aboriginal community members to enter and to determine how they will share cultural knowledges with students.

Our focus is on highlighting the importance of educating ourselves around the continuing impact of colonisation and of developing safe spaces for students and teachers to critically reflect on their implicit biases and understandings.

We also recognise that we are all on different stages of the continuum in terms of our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. This imperative to develop **'Indigenous cultural competency'** is reflected in the recent **Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)** discussion paper (AITSL, 2020).

The value of student voice in the process of change

Marrung is the Victorian Aboriginal education plan underpinned by Koorie self-determination, which sets out a 10-year vision of inclusion and respect of First Nations peoples, cultures, knowledges and experiences. **Yarraville West Primary School** has been guided by this vision and has responded to students' desires to learn more about First Nations peoples and cultures.



To gain students' perspectives on the impact of the school's efforts in implementing **Marrung**, and to inform curriculum planning around First Nations perspectives, approximately twenty Grade 5/6 students were invited to a forum. During these forums, students were given a platform to reflect on their understanding and determine whether the school is on the right path to creating meaningful change. Students were also encouraged to contribute ideas around how to strengthen this work.

They clearly voiced a shared view around the importance of developing their knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and contributions, underpinned by their personal interest. Some excerpts from the conversations are below.

We recognise the children's othering language of 'them' and 'their' is problematic and provides opportunities for further learning.

Students stated:

I think it's pretty important because we live in their – and our – land. We share the land with everybody and we need to acknowledge their past and their present because we need to celebrate them and everybody. Also, they had it really tough when the Europeans came, and we have to try and help them build back up.

I think we need to acknowledge that it wasn't originally our land and we don't own it; they do. And I think it's important that we acknowledge that [a] bit more.

We do have to respect their perseverance through all of this. They still respect all of us even if we're not the traditional owners of this land. They respect us and we live with them and I think it's amazing how they've just adapted to all of that.

Yeah, it's very resilient – it takes a lot of courage to do that.

All their artwork in the caves and things is being destroyed and damaged by like mines and things.

Reflecting on a visit from a survivor of the Stolen Generation, students commented:

I couldn't even imagine just being separated from my parents and my family just because of the colour of my skin.

Well they didn't just lose the land; they lost families; they lost generations, memories, languages and friends, stories and lives. Lots of things.

Transcripts of these discussions capture students' sophisticated thinking and understanding and highlight the importance of providing opportunities for them to shape and direct their learning around perspectives that acknowledge Aboriginal contributions and standpoints.

In response to a conversation around who is responsible for taking action against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' injustices, students responded:

Us. Us and the government.

Soon it's going to be us who are responsible for it.

*We've said sorry, but we haven't changed. It's not enough. We need to do more. I feel like we need to **be** a change.*

... there's people who are in more power who we can influence and vote and have our say but especially people in federal government like prime ministers, ministers and stuff, so everybody needs to have their say and tell them what they'd like to have improved. Like this! Like it's showing people what needs to be improved and how we can do it and what's going on.



Wild Blak Arts cultural educator Taungurung woman Cassie Leatham speaking with students

Students' insights demonstrated to teachers the potential of learners as citizens and activists. They were interested in what else they could do to strengthen teaching and learning.

Students had a lot to say about this, and suggested learning local Indigenous languages, having incursions with elders and guest speakers, visits to cultural sites, learning about Aboriginal cultures and languages as a specialist subject, in the same way as Italian or Japanese is taught in schools.

One student suggested:

If anyone has Aboriginal culture in them, they could share it with the class, or ask their parents if they could come and share.

One astute student suggested that there should be more Indigenous teachers employed at the school and queried as to whether there had ever been an Aboriginal teacher.

Outcomes

Student voice within the **Marrung Forum** is leading to greater **student agency**. Perhaps not surprisingly, encouraging student voice paves the way for further student voice, as the response from this student indicates:

We could ask our classmates if there was a specific area about Aboriginal history that they would like to learn; we could ask them and then maybe if there's something that a lot of people would like to learn, we could have someone come in and talk about it.

Teachers recognised the potential of shared decision-making and mutual ownership of curriculum through the expression of student voice during the forums. Some teachers commented that the forum had inspired them to spend more time planning curriculum that recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions. One Grade 5/6 team leader stated that the forums had informed and inspired a term's work on colonisation and its impact. Another teacher reflected on suitable excursions/incursions as well as a renewed commitment to dedicating more class time to exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

The forum highlighted the interplay between schools exposing students to examples of injustices faced by Aboriginal people, and students being motivated to extend their learning, and



ultimately developing their own social conscience leading to change. This ongoing interplay or 'dance' has seen students respond to ideas presented to them during their schooling, which is spurring them on to develop their own inquiry journey. They see the opportunities of influencing the curriculum as a basis for undertaking action. Engaging students in critical inquiry in this way becomes a process of civic engagement in which students

can explore the world around them, question injustices and positively have an impact on their environment (Mitra and Serriere, 2012).

An example of this was the work that teachers and students did in critiquing the current official national anthem and the alternative version penned by Mutti Mutti man **Kutcha Edwards** and **Judith Durham**. Edward's and Durham's lyrics reflect a much more inclusive approach to what it means to be Australian, with particular



representation and acknowledgement of Indigenous contributions: ***“Australia, let us stand as one, upon this sacred land”***.

Responses from students were unanimous in their preference for the new anthem, with one student commenting that *“it is more inclusive and engages Indigenous history”*. Conversations with students revealed strong opinions around truthfulness, fairness, racism, respect, inclusion, injustice of stolen land and the importance of considering the perspectives of Indigenous Australians. Students’ critique of the current official anthem included;

The song is not fair or truthful ... we are not young ... our history is old.

This song is not inclusive or an accurate representation of Australian history ... It hardly acknowledges Indigenous people. It is only talking about people who have colonised.

The song is racist ... It doesn't even mention traditional owners of this land.

I can't imagine having to sing this if I was Aboriginal.

I think the Australian anthem is untrue, unfair because it is full of lies and it includes a lot of racism and the whites' boast about their stolen land. Wealth for toil means we all get an equal amount, but the Aboriginal people don't think so because their land was taken and sold.

The impact of this critical inquiry has been evident at school assemblies in which students and teachers stand proudly with one voice to sing Edward's and Durham's version of the national anthem, with a new-found sense of solidarity and pride.

Other examples of student voice and agency:

- First Nations' students are consulted when determining the format of and their involvement in cultural days. A recent example of this was when these students shared the stage with an Aboriginal cultural educator and were given a platform to talk about their own heritage story.
- Following the screening of a video about the removal of the sacred Aboriginal **Djab Wurrung** trees to

make way for a highway, Grade 5/6s wrote a letter of objection to the Victorian Parliament. The students expressed their commitment to what they saw as an injustice by reading the letter out loud to the school during assembly.

- A growing knowledge base within the **Junior School Council** resulted in a collective desire to see Aboriginal recognition in the future naming of a new House system at the school.
- As part of the school's *Claymation* program (In which students script and create a short stop motion film), students initiated a film project called ***“Louie's Song”***. The story was about an Aboriginal teenager reconnecting with culture, which required seeking and being granted permission from the **Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI)** to create. This film promoted the importance of Indigenous cultures, languages and knowledges.
- From Prep upwards, students share the responsibility of doing

an acknowledgement of country at school assemblies.

- A recent poll of Grade 1/2 students about their preference for an inquiry focus indicated a strong interest in learning more about Aboriginal histories. This form of co-directing the curriculum came about in order to increase student agency within the school.

Through their active participation in these activities, *"...students learn they have power collectively and individually, to make change"* (Nieto, 2004: 55).

Students leading change in the community

The capacity that students have to institute change within their home and community environments should also be acknowledged.

Many parents have commented that they learnt little about Indigenous perspectives in their own schooling, and that their children are teaching them a lot. For example, leading up to singing the 'new' national anthem in assembly, their children were coming home and practising the lyrics, and were eager to have conversations with their parents and carers about the significance of the revised lyrics. This also led to informal conversations amongst parents around the non-inclusive nature of the current official anthem.

We need to embrace this idea of schools being sites of social change, and of students leading this change. Students saw this community and family sharing as part of their responsibility:

It's like a chain reaction of sharing.

Sharing it to your children, and them sharing it to their children and so on...

It's not like just your parents; it's like your grandparents and teachers and everybody who you know, passing down things that they learnt to you.

This change in the school community has been recognised by First Nations parents, an historically sidelined subset of the school community. **Matt Burns, Taungurung** parent and **RAP (Reconciliation Action Plan)** member, shares what it means for his daughter.



The efforts of Yarraville West Primary School over the past five years in creating genuine opportunities for the children and parents to broaden their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture has been very pleasing. Further, connections made within the school curriculum have enabled the children to obtain sound perspectives of the Traditional Owners of the lands in which we abide and how my ancestors lived in south east Australia.

Continuing momentum for change will see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families take an honoured place in the school's classrooms and broader community as respected members of the oldest living culture in the world.

Conclusion

Writing this piece has highlighted to us the important role **student voice and agency** has in creating momentum for change.

With an ongoing commitment to the attainment and maintenance of cultural competence within the school community, the school is developing its advocacy role in addressing systems that contribute to discrimination and

inequities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We hope you will have gained a sense of how students are playing a critical role in the cycle of change that is happening in the school's curriculum and school community more broadly. It is a dance with many different partners: students, teachers, parents, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, Elders, First Nations educators, the Koorie Engagement Support Officer, the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) Chair, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI) staff, and school leadership. It is a change that is widely recognised as being long overdue in our school system and will lead to a more just country.

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Critical discussions beyond the narrative: Partnership opportunities in curriculum and pedagogy

Monday 13th-Wednesday 15th December 2021

Hosted by:

AARE Children and Student Voice across all sectors Special Interest Group (SIG); and
REDI, Deakin University.

The **2021 Student Voice Symposium** will have an on-line format. It will provide space for academic and practitioner-level conversations across two focus areas: *curriculum* and *pedagogy*. It will centre on the practices of '*partnership opportunities*' in these areas.

The **format** of the symposium will also reflect the title of this conference by encouraging partnership orientations in facilitation, presentation and involvement from academics, practitioners, administrators and students.

Timeline

Symposium program available: 1 November

Registration opens: 1 November

Registration closes: 30 November

Symposium date: 13-15 December

Further information will be provided closer to the date.

If you have any questions, and to **indicate your interest** to be involved, please contact:

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A student's experience of being on an interview panel

Quite frankly, I was surprised when my Principal, **Ms Amvrazis**, offered me the opportunity to be a member of the panel working to find a relieving **Deputy Principal**.

This was not because I thought it was a radical action the school was taking, but because it felt impossible to represent all the students' different and unique beliefs in one decision. Any teacher, no matter the position, has a profound impact on countless students on a daily basis. A Deputy Principal is one of the most accessible teachers in our school environment and is necessary in making all students feel safe and accepted in their daily school lives.

Knowing this, I was honoured, excited but apprehensive to start.

The process of looking for a relieving Deputy Principal started by reading approximately six applications from the applicants. I was exposed to many new acronyms used as a part of teaching and learning pedagogy that revealed how teachers don't simply cover syllabus content, but instead teach in ways that will grow their students' brains to prepare us for our futures.

After reading the applications, the panel selected which ones we wanted to take a step further and interview. The discussion, about who to interview, was open and reminded me that being a teacher requires advanced teaching abilities, but also being able to foster a school community. As a panel, we devised questions to ask the applicants being interviewed. The panel had teacher, parent and student representatives and devising the questions allowed each group to find out how the application would meet their needs.

A few weeks later I experienced my first ever job interview, on a panel! Interviewing and meeting the teachers in person, whose applications we had poured over. This was such an unusual but rewarding experience.

At the conclusion of the interviews I had learnt so much about job interviews and was preparing for a major decision.

The discussion about who would receive the position continued for an hour (and a bit), but the panel unanimously decided **Ms Kaidbay** was the perfect person for the job, and she really has been.

I never expected to have learnt so much being on the panel. I have also been floored by the support of this initiative from the wider school community. Although I was initially concerned about being unable to represent all my peers as I was the 'student voice', I've realised the presence of a student, any student, does so much more.

It is easy for students to feel anonymous, unheard or voiceless in a school environment so, by involving students in appropriate but influential decisions, the student body can feel as though someone is speaking for them. I just can't wait till more students get the chance to exercise their voices more often.

Sophia Higgs

The Principal also comments - see next page



Student on recruitment panel: Principal's perspective

Asquith Girls High School embraces student voice and seeks to provide our students with authentic experiential opportunities where they have a say and are heard.

As an educational organisation, we advocate student voice, as student voice defines our school culture. As a school we seek to involve our students in decision-making at various levels so that we are able to transform the attitudes and systems that underlie our school community and service the needs of our learners. We believe such a culture enables students to become active and responsible leaders by giving school-wide responsibilities, experiences and opportunities to develop their understanding of how their voice contributes to mobilising continuous improvement across the school.

It is this school culture that inspired the idea of inviting a student leader, our **School Captain Sophia Higgs**, to join the internal recruitment panel for the **Stage 5 Deputy Principal Expression of Interest (EOI)**.

From the start, Sophia was integral to the panel and she brought a refreshing student perspective to the role and their expectations of this position. The advertised Deputy Principal position involved leading the school's **Strategic Direction – 'Connection and Purpose'**. This direction focuses on student engagement, agility, learnership and voice. Given the focus of the position, it felt natural to include a student in the recruitment panel, as the role focused on student voice and leadership.

As a professional team, all members of the panel adhered to the process and rules of the recruitment process. This included respecting the privacy of each applicant and adhering to the strict departmental recruitment requirements.

The panel engaged in robust conversations to review, deconstruct and discuss the strengths of different applications and the school's needs. This helped the panel decide on who they felt was most qualified to proceed to interview.

As a passionate and engaged student leader, Sophia actively embraced her responsibility as a vocal, thoughtful and

collaborative panel member. The members of the panel were pleasantly surprised by Sophia's depth of understanding of the process and ability to assess the EOIs against the selection criteria.

On the day of the interviews, Sophia, as an integral part of the EOI panel, asked questions and documented the applicants' responses. There was a lovely comradery amongst the panel. This was observed and commented by all applicants who were interviewed. The decision to offer the Deputy to **Ms Rhonda Kaidbay**, was unanimous. Ms Kaidbay, who joined the Asquith school community, is working with the school to further develop its strong collaborative culture that focuses on growth through student voice and choice.

It is worth noting that, like all panel members, Sophia developed a deeper and holistic understanding of the school's needs and her role in supporting the school in meeting them. It also provided her with a deeper understanding of the recruitment process and expectations. Sophia stated that *'it was the best opportunity ever'*.

The research indicates that student involvement can lead to creative, energetic and effective decision-making that may not have existed but for the students who are involved in the process. When students are **partners in decision making**, they are developing necessary skills in active citizenship that will carry them through life.

Therefore, my decision to invite Sophia to be part of the panel not only emphasised the significance of her student leadership role with our school community, but also demonstrated to the student body the power of students as contributors and change agents. It reinforced the power of active citizenship and demonstrated we truly value and respect students' voices and their contribution to school-wide decision making. This embraced trust in our students' input and demonstrated their responsibility towards their learning and their school.

Elizabeth Amvrazis
Principal

Connect's penultimate issue ... *We will be ceasing publication at the end of 2021*

After 250 issues of **Connect** over 42 years, this practice journal ceases publication at the end of 2021. **Connect** would rather end at a 'high point', in a strong position, rather than 'dwindle away'.

So this is the penultimate issue, with the final issue (#250) scheduled for November. Reflections are welcome; submit them by the end of October.

If there is a continuing need for some form of sharing of practices and reflections, and the will to establish something in that area, we'll see what happens after that.



Student agency in an ethnically diverse student community

In 2018, Year 9 students and staff in this Catholic secondary school in the north western metropolitan region of Melbourne, Australia attempted a pilot program surrounding **student voice** (see *Connect* 239, October 2019: 9-15 for an account of this). In 2021, the culture of **student voice** has been established in Year 9 as well as throughout the school. Therefore, the Year 9 teaching team decided to attempt building **student agency** amongst the Year 9 cohort during our social emotional program curriculum.

Teacher Training

To prepare for the **student agency program**, the teachers involved undertook further training in order to complete the program successfully. The first two sessions were designed to train staff in **student voice**. Staff who had not previously undertaken the program participated in these workshops. The third and fourth workshops were designed to train staff in dealing with ethnic **student voice** programs and was completed in 2019. The fifth workshop provided staff with an overview of how to implement the **student agency program** and was completed in 2021 before the **agency** classes begun.

During the first training session, teachers were asked to match up definitions of wellbeing terms that were similar to **student voice**. The purpose of this assignment was to allow teachers to better understand the theory behind the **student voice** concept, and to narrow the focus of the program. Secondly, the potential benefits of **student voice** were discussed, as were the negative impacts of silencing voice in educational settings.

In the second training session, teachers were given guidelines on how to present and communicate during the program. Egan's model was used to provide direction on the use of body language, active listening and summarising techniques. Teachers were given strategies they could use, including probing questions, meaning more in-depth answers could be provided and more useful qualitative data could

be obtained. Thirdly, teachers were paired off with another member of the teaching team and asked to use what they had learnt in the workshops in an example: a role play scenario. Examples of **student voice** statements were read out by partner A, while partner B was required to provide partner A with voice by using the techniques provided. The example scenarios were specifically designed to challenge teacher opinions. Finally, a reflection task was completed based on the role play, and the teaching team had a discussion on possible teacher emotions and the outcomes of the program.

The third session focused on understanding the ethnic background of the students, since this was one of the barriers identified in the first program. In the first activity, staff members looked at possible differences between what students say and what they mean. They were given various examples of statements that students had said in the previous years and were asked to look beyond the words for tone, meaning and core values. It was hoped that, by doing this activity, staff members could develop a deeper understanding of what students meant.

Secondly, staff members looked at the various ethnic groups and their values and how this might impact the culture of voice within the school community. The three ethnic groups: South-East Asian, Middle Eastern and African were identified. Ethnicity is a relevant consideration in discussions

of **student voice** because a person's ethnicity not only informs the way that they formulate and express their thoughts, but may also influence whether they are comfortable expressing their voice in a school setting. Some students may, for example, hold back thoughts or avoid discussing certain ideas because of specific cultural norms about authority and education.

The fourth session focused on dealing with student issues when implementing **student voice workshops**. This was due to the fact that, in the original program, staff felt ill-equipped to handle situations that presented themselves. Staff members were presented with issues and then worked collaboratively on how to handle these situations.

One such issue was that teachers were originally asked to refrain from challenging students who spoke against their values or philosophies. Although this seemed to have helped students feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts – which was important for a start-up pilot program – it also seemed to reduce teachers' morale and empowerment, and limited opportunities for student-teacher dialogue (and thus for the development of important communication skills).

It was noted by teachers that, in this situation, understanding by both parties was key. The students need to understand why things are done the way they are and the staff members need to understand how that impacts on the students. In future **voice and agency programs**, staff are encouraged to have difficult discussions with students during the program. A **student voice program** is by its nature **dialogue based**, and the desired outcome is a shared and respectful understanding, not just a one-sided conversation.

A second issue that occurred was that the students lacked awareness of educational policy, which led to conflict. It was seen as a missed opportunity to

provide context and clarity and may have led to the students feeling that their concerns were not heard. In this situation teachers need to use **student voice programs** to provide these contexts for the students.

Having these discussions is a good pathway for students to begin thinking about **agency**, to identify problems and to develop their critical thinking skills.

One final issue was that some teachers felt that they were sub-consciously forwarding their own agenda or purposely asking students to push a certain issue they felt was valuable. As a result, students may have learnt poor communications skills and teachers may have influenced **student voice** in a negative way.

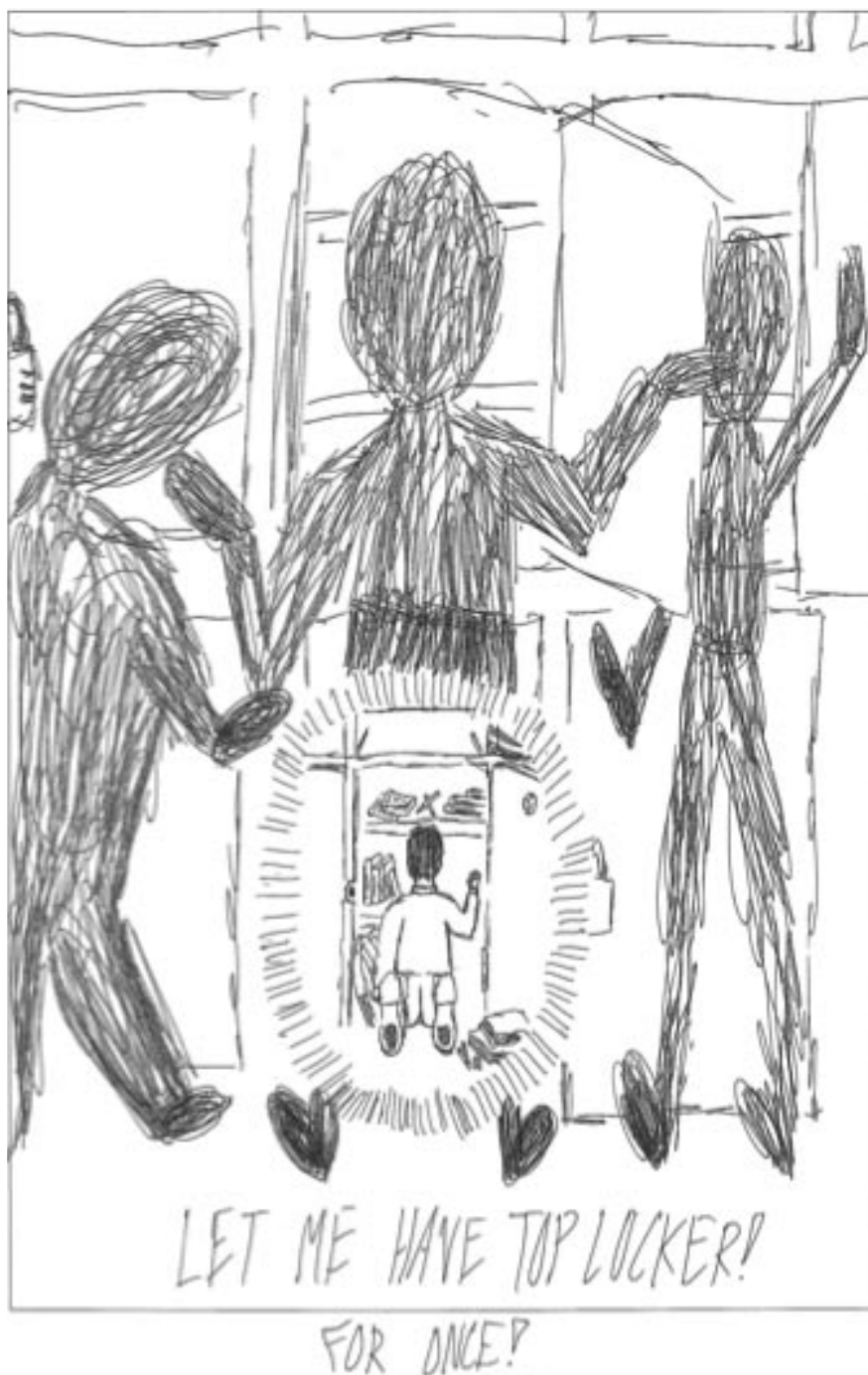
Teachers in **student voice programs** are **facilitators**. Poor educational leadership in this manner does more harm than good. The students control the direction and pace of the workshop, making the workshop feel organic and unforced. Teachers need to remove educational jargon terms and eventually, through dialogue, the common good will shine through.

During the fifth and final staff training session, staff were provided with a scaffolded overview of lesson plans of the **agency** classes. They were then given examples of work that had been completed at other schools that had been successful as an exemplar to help them with implementation.

Student Voice Program 2018-2021 Evaluation

Over the past four years, the **student voice program** has followed the original structure set out in 2018. Students participate in three different sessions.

The first session is completed in an artistic manner, where students are provided with an A3 sheet of paper and they are asked to draw a visual representation of what the school looks like from their point of view. Teachers who implemented the program reported the art workshop has been the most successful for gaining an understanding of how all students are feeling about school. It also allows all students to express themselves in a creative way, and offers a means for all students to provide context and their view of the school without the pressures of a dialogue-based discussion.



One drawback is that the artwork can be time-consuming to analyse. Colours are often used by the students to create feeling. Over the past few years we have seen similar types of images that include friendship, relationships, suns, love hearts, sporting equipment and positive emojis. On the other hand, fire, prisons and stressed students surrounded by books have also been negative themes that have been seen each year.

The second and third workshops are heavily **dialogue based**. In both workshops, boys and girls are separated into two different focus groups. Every year the girls have been very positive

about separation. Boys can often dominate the girls in discussions or group activities, and so splitting the focus groups in this manner leads to the girls speaking rather than being silenced. The girls are also provided with a more inclusive environment when doing so.

The workshop starts with a main question read out by the facilitator. Students are asked to begin by thinking individually about the question and writing their thoughts on a sticky note pad. Then students work in pairs or small groups to pair like thoughts and share them with the group. Finally, they read out their statements to the whole group and the workshop follows from there.

The second workshop starts with the question of *“how are we going as a school community?”* The third workshop starts with the question of *“how is my learning currently in Year 7/8/9 or 10?”*

In the second workshop, students talk mostly about how the school is going from a culture and policy point of view, whereas in the third workshop they discuss the curriculum and how it is delivered by teachers. We have found that it is important to separate these two workshops into two different themes because students often start by talking about small trivial issues before they get into depth. They seldom talk about big issues first; rather, once they warm up to the process, students can think creatively about the strengths and issues that are occurring. Students rarely bring up curriculum content when asked how school is going as a whole. Asking about this directly, in a dedicated workshop, helps rectify that issue.

In 2019, we attempted to ask students about each subject area and provide feedback to subject area learning meetings. However, upon reflection, the workshop did not provide quality data as students were forced to mention subjects. Teachers reported that the workshops did not flow well. Students did not discuss the way classes were structured, student-teacher relationships, and some of the strategies the school was trying to implement. Our experience has taught us that asking an open question at the start of the workshop creates a more organic conversation, and that most subjects and curricula are mentioned without needing to be forced.

At this stage, teachers are encouraged to focus on ‘small wins’: issues that can be addressed quickly or changes that can be implemented easily. Examples of this include purchasing hygienic bins in the girls’ toilet block, placing a prayer book in each classroom for home-room prayer and providing students with another hard copy timetable that they can hang up in their locker.

Teachers have also found that the *“even better if”* follow up question works very well for these workshops. Using this strategy allows the students to think about an optimal state and provides direction for **student agency workshops** in the future.

Class	Activities and Objectives
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice breaking games were completed so that the students could create a deeper relationship with each other. The teacher provided the class with an overall picture of statements the students said during the student voice workshop. The class brainstormed possible goals and objectives that could be completed. They were encouraged to think creatively during this time. Students then narrowed their goal into a SMART Goal. Students were paired off into groups and given a goal to work on as their project aim. Depending on the group, the students worked within these groups to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather more information eg they created surveys and sent these out to the student body. Completed their own research on their topic. Came up with possible solutions to their goal and worked on this (poster, created an activity, etc) Asked relevant staff members or students for interviews to present their ideas and then worked on questions on what to say.
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of previous class work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysed the data from the surveys that the students had completed. Continued with their own research. Completed their activity between lessons (at lunchtimes, after school or during homeroom)
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewed various staff members to provide feedback or present their ideas. Analysed their effectiveness of what they had completed. Presented their work to the rest of the class.

Student Agency Class Outline

Staff were presented with this basic overview (above) of what to achieve within the timeframe during the fifth teacher training workshop. The time frame for this unit was 3 x 2-hour blocks of time with one week in between each session.

Each class was asked to complete a small project based on what topic the student was given. Students were given the option of five different topics to choose from, based on what students mentioned during the student voice workshops. Students were sent a *google* form and asked to preference specific topics.

Student Agency Groups Overview 2021

School Gratitude Group

During the **student voice workshops**, students talked about how thankful they were to the school for the work they do. The students spoke about how teachers

are not appreciated enough and how they could contribute to continuing to make school a happy and positive place to attend. The class in this group focused on awards and certificates, inspirational quotes around the school, and whole school activities that could be run.

They first requested that additional awards could be presented to students throughout the term, not just at the end of the year.

As a result, at our Year 9 community homeroom on Friday mornings, students were asked to provide each other with awards inside their homeroom that focused on positive performance in community. Helping classmates with work and organisation, wearing the uniform with pride, attending all classes, and punctuality were some of the many awards that were given by students to each other. This created a positive environment and students applauded loudly when these awards were presented. Secondly,

the group found many inspirational quotes from politicians, athletes, scientists, artists, poets and religious leaders and placed them in the student bulletin. Each day these quotes were read out to each student across the school in the hope that it would provide a positive mindset and encourage persistence.

Finally, students worked with the librarians to provide ideas for the upcoming book week and promoted this throughout the school.

School Curriculum Group

A constant theme in the past three years of **student voice workshops** is that the students crave a more hands-on approach to learning, rather than theory-based units.

As a result of this, groups of students presented at faculty subject team meetings to suggest some ways that teachers could change their model of teaching. Two groups spoke to the science department. They suggested more practical experiments and a change in assessment from tests to project-based tasks. Staff were willing to listen to the conversation and students reported positively on this. As a result, staff worked to change the next science topic, **ecosystems**, into a project-based learning task. However, due to time constraints caused by exam preparation and the COVID-19 lockdown in Melbourne, staff ran out of time to complete the preparation and the students completed a test for the unit.

Another group spoke to the humanities subject area. They asked for more history content rather than the large amount of geography and economics that they had been studying previously. The humanities teachers showed the students the scope and sequence for the entire year and showed the students where history was being taught. A discussion was had about the need for students to view the scope and sequence at the start of the year as it would provide direction and context for the students. This was taken to the learning and teaching team who are currently reviewing these requests.

School Structure Group

The school has been through a change in the timetable over the past 12 months. This is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the school completing the Berry Street Educational model training as well as **Visible Learning** in 2019. Periods went



from 6 x 50 minute periods per day to 5 x 60 minute periods per day. Homeroom time was also moved from the beginning of the day (8.45-9.00 am) to before the recess break (10.45-11.05 am).

Students sought time to speak with senior leaders at the school to outline how the changes had impacted on them both positively and negatively. One group spoke to the Principal of the school. Unfortunately, the ideas proposed by the students could not be implemented, as they contradicted the school policies as well as government laws imposed due to the various lockdowns and social distancing measures. Although the students came back from the interview disheartened, they reported that they had not thought about it from that point of view and gained greater understanding of how and why decisions were made.

Another group spoke to the daily organiser who was responsible for timetabling and electives. The students reported that, due to electives moving to single lessons instead of double lessons, time for preparation and packing up was difficult. This was a problem for many subjects; for example in Food Technology, students found that it was hard to cook the recipes and perform the necessary clean-up in the timeframe provided. This was taken to the College learning and teaching team and they are reviewing this for 2022.

The last group spoke to the year level leader about community

homeroom each Friday. They wanted this assembly to be more engaging rather than informative. This group worked with the **School Gratitude Group** to implement the awards process mentioned above.

School Lunchtime Group

Every **student voice group** talked about the lack of physical activity during lunchtime. They suggested lunchtime sport programs and raised concerns that the College oval (shared with the nearby primary school) could not be accessed at lunch.

This group worked together to conduct a survey of the students, aiming to create change in these areas. They collated the data and presented the information to themselves as well as the Deputy Principal of Pastoral Care. Although they attempted to run a program themselves, they hit many barriers and ran out of time to implement anything of value.

At the same time, a new staff member was employed as a learning support officer as well as a sports assistant. He was tasked with attempting to implement a lunchtime sports program. As a short-term fix, the College put out table tennis tables for students to play at lunchtime. In semester 2, the Sport, Health and Physical Education team (SHAPE) changed some of their timetabled classes to allow the College hall to be free during student lunchtimes in the hope that some type of lunchtime sport can be implemented this term.

School Technology Group

Students criticised the technology access at school. In their experience, the school internet wifi was slow and the connection constantly dropped in and out.

First, the **technology group** interviewed an information technology staff member. He explained to them about the server issues and took them on a tour showing them server and wifi connection points. They also asked about *YouTube* access since this was blocked. He explained that, in previous years, students used *YouTube* for music downloading and this would place extra stress on the already strained school servers. The students reported that they had gained a greater understanding of how the internet works from an organisational perspective as well as how decisions were made about school policy.

Students believed that the laptops could be used more effectively by teachers inside the classroom. They communicated this to the learning and teaching team of the school and provided resources for subject areas to use that they considered student friendly. Students spoke to the teachers and requested that the *Kahoots* online learning quizzes that were played in class could become team based rather than individual, to create more teamwork amongst subject classes.

Student Opinions

Students who were interviewed post program completion displayed mixed feelings. Most were very positive about the process. One student mentioned that he was **"surprised and intrigued"** about the program. He mentioned that he saw the possibility for change and that he had started completing surveys, which he would not have done previously, because he wanted the students to do something worthwhile with his opinion. Another student said that it was important to have the freedom to improve what they wanted to, and that every student was expected to participate in the program, not just the known leaders or current student representative council. **"It's good that your ideas at school can become a reality,"** said a male participant.

The splitting of boys and girls into two different workshops was also identified as important. **"We (girls) spoke so much more because the boys weren't in the class with us,"** said a female participant.

Students reported that they felt that teachers gave more context and made them understand why things were done the way they are, which was a change for this year. One girl said **"We didn't waste time on the small stuff because teacher told us why. That was so different from past years."** Students also mentioned that the entire program was fun and enjoyable.

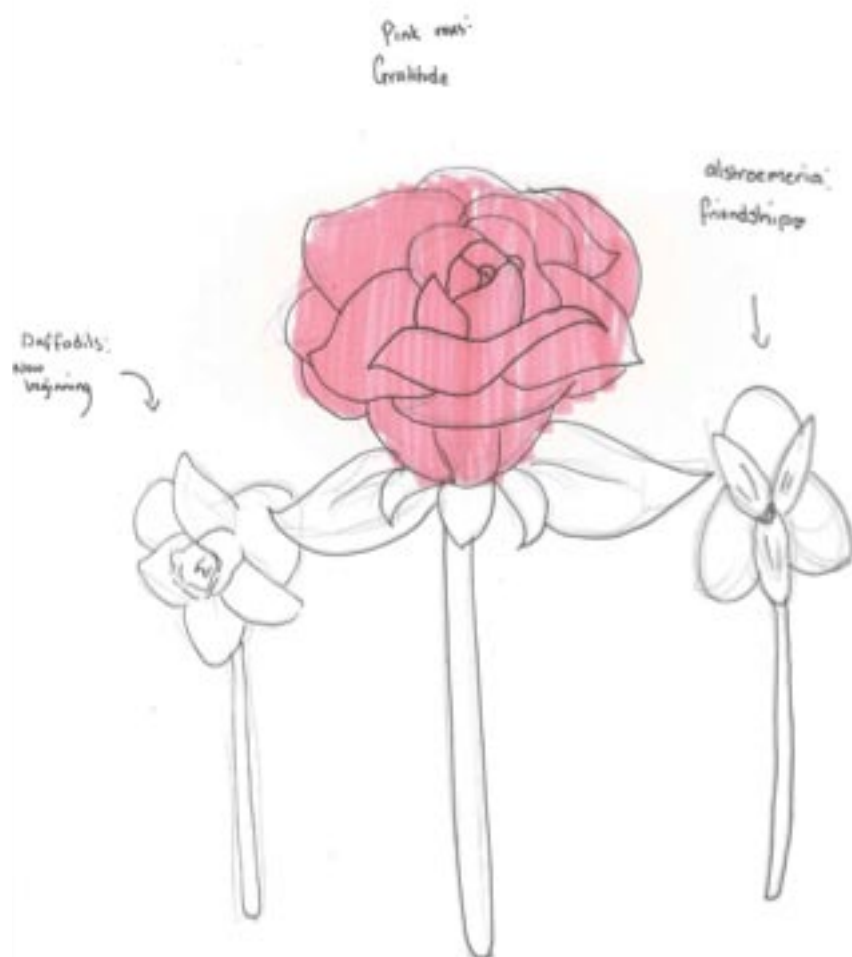
Other students were negative about the **agency** classes. **"It was good to express how we feel and teachers all listened to what we had to say. But nothing has changed. We presented to the class. We talked with the right people. But then we came back and we are doing the same thing,"** expressed a female student. Some students said that the teachers did not emphasise how important the program was. Some students did not take the program seriously and thought that it was a waste of class time. Others said that they did not have many ideas to contribute and hence did not get much out of the program.

One of the main issues for the students during the program is that there was no time given to identifying potential barriers that the students would face.

School policy was a main barrier. It was the first-time students had worked with school staff leaders in such a way and they had little understanding of how organisations work. Many students interviewed said that it was difficult to manage the disappointment when teachers or senior leaders said ideas would not work for a particular reason. **"When she said no to all of our idea, it's like where do we go to from now?"**

Students said that the leaders of the school made some really good points and forced them to see things from a different perspective. Students understood policy better, however motivation decreased when this occurred.

Some students had an expectation that everything that the students said was going to be implemented no matter what. Managing this expectation versus the reality of working in schools, gave the students context and understanding.





Some surveys that were developed by the students were poorly sent out with no context provided. The students expected it to be done by all and were disappointed when this was not completed.

Teacher Opinions

The teachers who were involved in the program met together to evaluate the program in its entirety. Some senior leaders who were interviewed by students also had their say.

It was the group's belief that the program has large merit in our current school community. The main benefit identified is the communication skills developed by the students through the program. It also provides direction and an opportunity for students to have a say in school life, while developing student and teacher relationships.

The program links to the Victorian Curriculum, specifically under Personal and Social Capability, as well as Civics and Citizenship Education. Connection to school is also enhanced because of the **agency program**.

The staff were asked about the training sessions that had been provided, specifically workshops three and four that focused on the **ethnic student voice**. All teachers spoke highly of the training. Teachers reported that they had a higher

sense of culturally appropriate language and that they had used the core values of the ethnic backgrounds of students informally within their classes. One staff member said that *"it has changed the way I view the concept of respect at our school. I understand why they behave a certain way. And I'm more understanding of that."*

When asked specifically about the impact of **agency**, the teachers thought that the program generates a sense of pride for the students.

The school has now moved from the Student Representative Council being the sole voice for the students, to now having all students having a platform to raise issues and concerns. They have also moved from just having a say and providing direction, to creating the direction themselves through collective responsibility.

Students have also developed skills that can be used in leadership type environments and increasing the culture of students applying for student leadership opportunities.

The group were asked about how the culture of the school has changed since the **student voice programs** beginnings in 2018. Teachers reported that they have changed the way that they have viewed student feedback.

They see **student voice** as a subject of value, not just a tick-box exercise, and genuinely attempt to try and change the way they teach or conduct themselves.

Senior leaders said that the College Leadership Team has become more data informed and that they have a listening culture. They feel that student opinion is given more weight than ever before and that it provides direction and purpose for planning.

The staff were asked about the overall performance of the students during the **agency** classes. They felt that the students were honest about how well they did and what they achieved.

Students who had already previously developed communication skills flourished in this environment. They were able to show leadership skills and clearly achieved more when looking at the overall outcomes. On the other hand, students with poor communications skills developed little during this time. They did not have the skills or confidence to complete their goal.

The staff mentioned that it was interesting to see how students reacted when their group faced challenges. While some showed a high level of resilience, and continued even when faced with barriers, some students became deflated when things did not go their way. The teachers had the opportunity to talk about resilience as a whole with the year level. The message to the students was that things do not always go right, and good practice is how you evaluate what occurred, and seeing mistakes as opportunities for learning.

The school also has a partnership with the company **Pivot**. We talked about the difference between using a company like **Pivot** and the **student voice program**. **Pivot** is great for individual feedback and can be used for teacher specific development. It also provides an opportunity for all students to provide feedback in an anonymous manner, where they can express freely what the students are thinking. Teachers then use the data to develop their teaching practices.

In contrast, the **student voice and agency programs** are more dialogue based and more directed towards community scale projects and can spark a topic of conversation. Both have their place in **student voice programs** throughout the school.

Future Directions

In 2022 the **student voice and agency program** will be a feature of our social and emotional program at Year 9. It was a view of the teachers that the project time needs to be reallocated to make the project work. Instead of for two hours per week for three weeks, the program will try one hour per week for six weeks. This is because it was felt that the students needed more time to gather data and implement their chosen topics well, and that the extended time frame might allow them to achieve their goals.

The students also need time to develop relationships within their new group. As staff develop a greater confidence to teach this new concept the outcomes could also improve. The staff have asked for further training focusing on how to develop students that do not have the communication skills needed to be successful in student agency workshops. The group also needs time to consider barriers to their goals and work with the teachers on how to possibly overcome these.

The conversation about how families are engaged with this process is encouraging. The school does not currently have a 'parents and friends' type group, and this might be a way to encourage families to join. The school does have family information nights as well as cultural nights for various ethnic groups. We will attempt to implement a workshop during these nights.

Thanks

The author would like to publicly acknowledge the efforts of the teaching staff who have completed this program throughout the past three years. Without their dedication and time spent training, planning, implementing and evaluating the program, the **student voice and agency unit** would not have been possible. And lastly, thank you to the students that have found their **voice and agency** throughout the time provided. I admire their resilience, leadership and positive attitude.

Bradley Taylor
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Expression of Interest: Community of Practice – Student Voice and Agency in the Early Years

As we gear up to farewell *Connect*, we reflect on the amazing people who have been drivers in the area of student voice and agency in both upper years primary and secondary school settings. The journey is not over and, as we continue to learn, **we need you, your expertise and your passion for giving all students a voice.**

Whilst there is amazing work happening within the upper years of primary school, the groundwork for students' voices and agency need to be laid at an earlier stage. With this in mind, this is a call-out for any teachers who would like to join a **Community of Practice with a focus of student voice and agency in the early years (prep – 2)**. I am working on an action research project and would love to consult with educators who are keen to share their knowledge, thoughts, experiences and want to come on this journey as we tap into an area of great need.

Expressions of interest can be sent directly to me at the address below. I look forward to connecting!

Sophie Cartelli

Rosanna Primary School, Victoria

sophie.cartelli@education.vic.gov.au



It's not OK to be away:

Student voices on why attendance matters at school

If given the opportunity to tell others about attendance in schools, what do you think students would say? In our school, a simple classroom activity had a significant impact upon students' understanding of attendance. As students investigated further into the multifaceted layers of attendance, they found that very few resources had been developed specifically from a student's point of view.

In 2020, Stage 5 Photographic and Digital Media students at **Francis Greenway High School (FGHS)**, located in the Maitland area of NSW, participated in a NSW Department of Education survey on *"Why Attendance Matters."* This survey was completed online, with the **Student Voices** team¹ asking students to consider general attendance in school settings. It also asked school age students to discuss ways in which teachers could engage and improve classroom content and overall school participation for students like them.

During this survey, FGHS students displayed high levels of engagement, and began discussing attendance in a general manner, based on their own personal experiences. **After all, who knows students' experiences of attendance (or not) better than other students?**

The **Student Voices** team also invited students to submit creative designs and think-pieces discussing attendance concerns and engagement from diverse perspectives. FGHS students began creating a range of draft texts that discussed attendance from various points of view, cultural and otherwise. As a class, students collaboratively examined attendance data for their school, then researched state attendance data individually.

Students were quickly shocked to find that attendance in schools was an increasing problem: not just for our school, but for schools across the country.

Students also discussed their dismay at the lack of resources created by students that addressed attendance concerns, and

set out to create their own, which would be submitted to the **Student Voices** team at the end of the year.

Going beyond research and investigation, students found a niche that had not been explored for some time. The challenge in this was to communicate their research to the target audience: that of their peers and teachers alike, and make a difference - be heard.

Students accessed their prior knowledge of *Adobe Creative Software* and graphic design elements and created a range of media addressing attendance benefits. Students' preliminary drafts were not viewed by the teacher, with students instead relying on each other to guide their responses. This facilitated a stronger level of **'student voice'** and allowed student designs to be authentic and unpredictable.

Adam Fletcher discusses the four quadrants of **Student Voice**, which include *Traditional* and *Nontraditional* voice as well as *Convenient* and *Inconvenient* voice. Students' designs, which were created without teacher consultation, allowed them to depict their inconvenient voice, unfiltered, unbiased and unpremeditated. Due to this, students' final works were engaging and clever, with students discussing benefits of attendance in schools and overall impact of non-attendance, in a relevant and meaningful manner.

Students' designs reflected their personal connection to attendance and allowed them to comment on

attendance in a way relevant to their target audience. Students enjoyed the creative process and collaborated significantly with one another, with students using critical dialogue to discuss the entire making process, from beginning to end.

Students' multimodal designs were submitted to the **Student Voices** team at the end of 2020 and were selected as successful entries in early January, 2021. Students and their families were notified of their success at their return to school in Term 1. These designs were then uploaded to the Department of Education's *Attendance matters - resources for schools* page² under the *'Engaging Student Voice'* subheading in mid April, 2021.

At our school, we proudly display the *'Attendance Matters'* designs in our front foyer, with copies in the Principal's office and staff rooms, as well as in selected classrooms. The designs are regularly referenced in whole-school activities, as attendance is a particular focus for all NSW Department of Education schools over the next four years. We have plans to embed these into future wellbeing activities, with students' responses guiding us to create a more holistic and student-led curriculum.

Teliece Wallace

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¹ <https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/student-voices>

² <https://bit.ly/375O3Ss>

Seven students who participated in the project spoke about the process and outcomes:

What did you do that assisted you when creating this project?

Riley: Firstly we began by completing the student poll on “*Why Attendance Matters.*” We then discussed as a class the importance of attendance and general statistics on attendance in our school. Some of us looked at National and State statistics of student attendance in departmental schools, while others researched previous poster campaigns. We agreed that previous poster campaigns had been designed *for* students but very few had been created *by* students.

How did you develop your ideas?

Emily: After we looked at poster designs, we began to develop our draft proposals in class. Working in pairs, we were able to bounce ideas off each other and this allowed us to create designs that discussed the importance of attendance, in a range of ways. Our ideas were developed through incorporating elements from previous designs that we felt were successful and that related to school age students like us. In the end we chose designs that clearly addressed the benefits associated with high attendance, as we felt this had a greater impact on students’ overall understanding.

What does your final design convey or discuss?

Sophie: All of our messages are different and we hope that they are received well. For some of us, we discuss the importance of attending school, whilst others list statistics about poor attendance for shock value. Some discuss attendance specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and others list the benefits of attending school regularly. We all agreed that attendance needs to be greater, and one way that this can be achieved is through engagement of students in the classroom. It is especially important to attend school in order to reach your full potential and to build upon the diverse skills that school teaches you.

Why did you choose to focus on a particular aspect of attendance?

Chloe: We all chose our designs for different reasons. I chose a design which showcased the lifelong effects of missing school. This was demonstrated through depicting statistics, as I believed that this was more confronting and showed the importance of attending school in a clear and visible manner. Others chose designs which they felt would appeal more to a target audience.

What was something that surprised you when learning about attendance?

Jazmin: We were really surprised to hear that attendance is a growing problem. When our teacher first showed us attendance statistics, we couldn’t believe that it could have such a big impact on a young person’s life. It all adds up very quickly, and if you are away only one day a week or fortnight, you are missing out on so much and sometimes you don’t even realise. The thing that I found most surprising was that attendance changes between year groups. It was

really interesting to see statistics in relation to how many students don’t attend school on a regular basis.

Are you happy with your overall design?

Leilani: Yes, I feel like it conveys the message that attendance is important; it appeals to the student body and is relevant for my age group. Sometimes posters can be a bit hit and miss, especially those created for a target audience, but our posters explore

themes that are relevant to us and other school age students. My particular design reflects my culture and it is something that I am proud to showcase. We are all very happy with our designs as they reflect us as individuals and demonstrate our capabilities as contemporary artists.

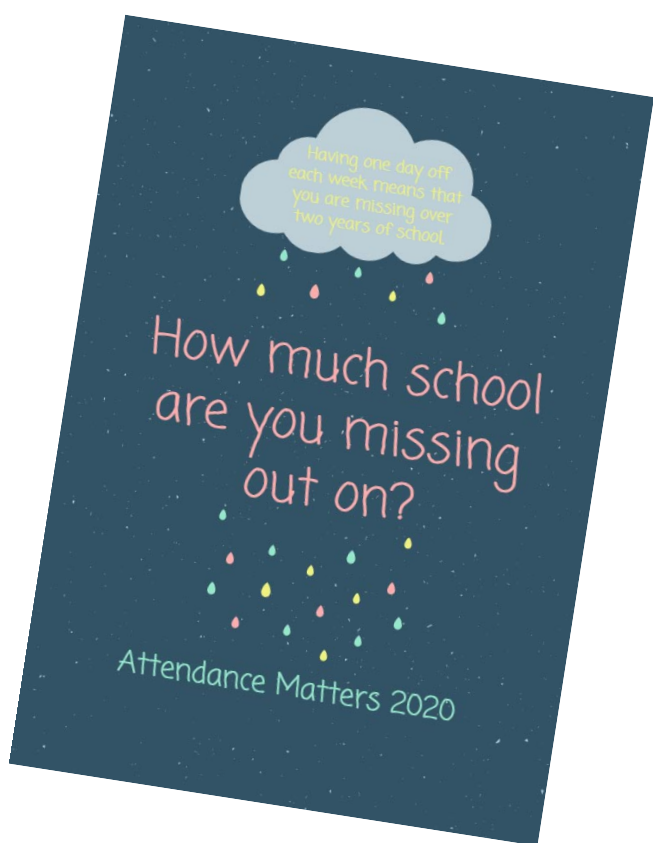
Do you think attendance matters?

All: Absolutely, our personal experiences at school shape who we are as young adults and as future members of society.

- Commitment to attendance is key; if you don’t come to school how can you show that you are truly committed to anything?
- School is a practice run for the real world; it sets you up for future career success.
- School prepares you for the workforce and creates a sense of normalcy and routine. It also gives you a chance to socialise and be with your peers.
- Come to school. You are given opportunities to expand upon your prior knowledge and learning capabilities, with school fostering a lifelong desire to learn. Not only that, but you develop friendships and bonds that will last a lifetime.
- School allows me to escape my hectic home life and I’ve made some really good friends and connections through school, not just with peers but teachers as well.

Jazmin, Chloe, Evan, Sophie, Emily, Leilani, Riley
from: <https://bit.ly/3j1qUpY>





Looking back on my time in **Stage 5 Photographic and Digital Media**, I feel a sense of achievement and pride. At the time I did not truly understand how important attendance is or the concerns surrounding attendance, as my attendance has always been impeccable.

When researching attendance last year, I found that many students are away for different reasons and I thought that maybe it was because of their own Mental Health or possibly that they were feeling too stressed to attend. Schools are really high impact environments that are really stressful and full on so it helps to have subjects that really engage you but also challenge your thinking and creativity.

If schools were to offer more student conscious spaces and cater to students' needs rather than the needs of the syllabus, schools would be far more engaging and happier places.

Riley:

As a proud Aboriginal woman, my focus was on identifying areas surrounding First Nations peoples in regards to their attendance in departmental schools.

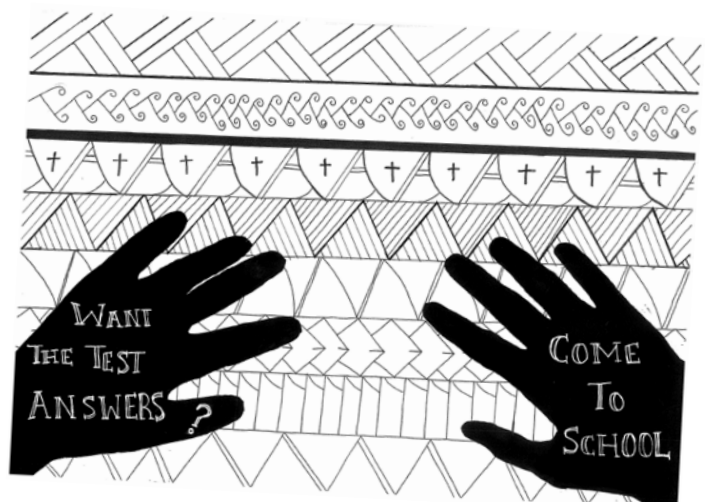
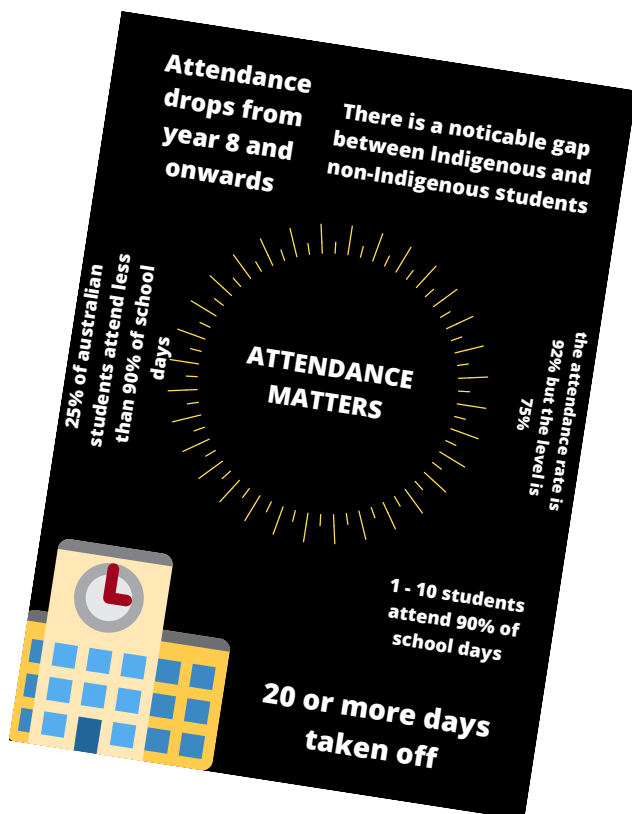
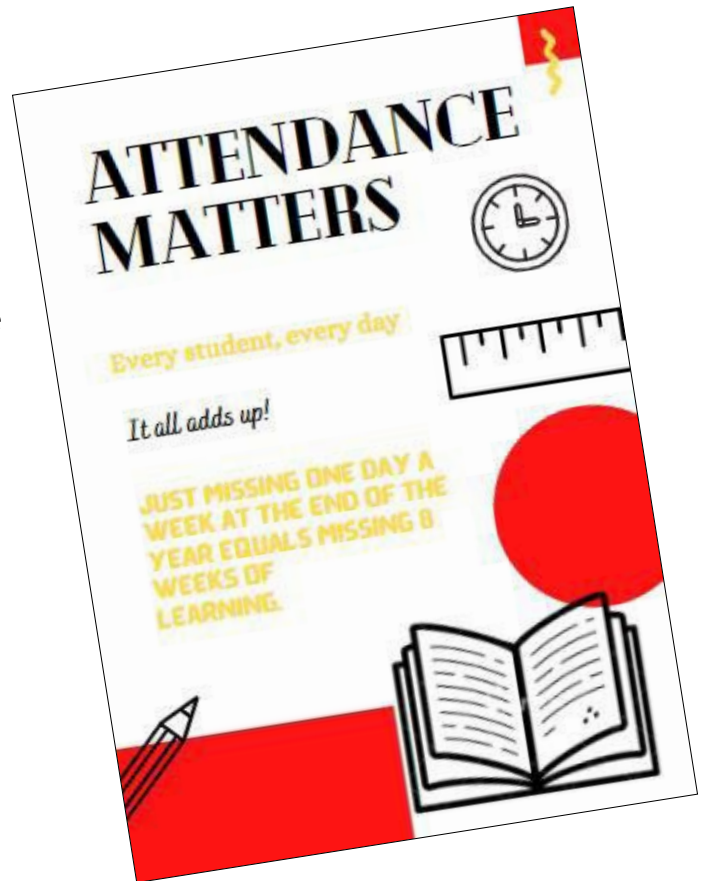
In Term 3, 2020, I entered the Department-run *Identity and Education: A Deadly Combination* competition, which requested young Aboriginal people in NSW to create a multimedia resource that was focused around Indigenous attendance. I won in my category, along with my younger sister and two others from my school. When we began working together in Term 4, I already knew about attendance statistics and applied this knowledge to our new task. My final design incorporated aspects of my culture alongside statistics surrounding poor attendance.

At our school we have a voice.

We have a say in what we want to learn and how we want to learn it. Our opinion is valued and we are respected.

I actively come to school each day because I enjoy the whole school atmosphere and like being in a supportive and collaborative environment. I am respected and I feel that my culture is recognised. Due to this, I have taken on many leadership roles within my school, most recently that of school captain.

If schools were seen to value their students more and let them make choices about their own learning and academic futures I feel that school attendance would be much higher.



A student-led session in Cívics and Politics Education

I am a secondary school student who is passionate about **civics and citizenship education**. In particular, I strive to include young voices in formal politics through electoral education in schools. Here is a reflection of what I have done so far, how I became inspired, and my learnings gained from these experiences.

Young people are becoming increasingly disengaged from formal politics. Political disillusion and apathy, fuelled by a lack of political knowledge, leave more and more students feeling unequipped for political elections once they reach voting age. Some cast their votes rashly; others vote without sufficient electoral knowledge. In the more extreme cases, donkey votes and informal votes are also cast.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed. Elections are our opportunity to have a say in the ideologies, values and plans that Australia adopts for the next few years. It is an opportunity to shape how we would like to be governed and to engage in society as active and informed citizens. As Australians, we live in a democracy where we have a voice in politics. It is a privilege that citizens in many other countries do not have. We should be taking our votes seriously, with the knowledge that our vote matters.

Session overview

I decided to run an **electoral education session** for Senior School students who are about to cast their first votes. Not only

would this help equip them with the knowledge required for elections, but it would also be a good way to increase students' political and civics awareness at my school.

I contacted our Deputy Head of Humanities and proposed the idea of an **electoral education session**. She was very supportive of the idea and helped me contact Senior School to organise a time and date for the session. Eventually, we have locked in a date for the **23rd August**, General Period, for me to present to all Year 11 students.

So far, I have had a few meetings with teachers to plan the session collaboratively. I shared the ideas I have in mind for the session and received their suggestions and feedback. We agreed that it would be the most feasible to structure the session as an informative talk, interspersed with interactive activities and discussion questions to keep it engaging. Moreover, I would incorporate information I had collected from a **Civics and Citizenship student survey** (*see later*) into the session, so that the session can reflect student voice and suit student preferences.

I plan to start the session with a debrief of the current student disengagement from formal politics, whilst inviting students to reflect upon their thoughts on politics and voting. Then, I would debunk some common misconceptions surrounding politics, and explain its role in driving changes and maintaining an organised society. I would next provide some basic information surrounding Australia's electoral voting system (including how to vote, where your vote goes, and why it matters), and use interactive demonstrations to illustrate these concepts.

My enthusiasm

What motivated me to run this session?

My interest in **civics and citizenship education** began more than a year and a half ago.

When I first read about the Premier's *Spirit of Democracy* essay competition in November 2019, I was eager to participate. As a ninth-grade student with plenty of free time and a love for the Humanities, I liked the idea of a potential two-week study tour to learn about ancient Greece: the 'prize' for winning the competition.

Back then, I only had a very rudimentary understanding of politics and civics and, like many other students, I felt very neutral towards the topic. But throwing myself into the task, I soon became very intrigued by the principles behind democracy and the fundamental role that it plays in our society. I learnt that Australia is a representative democracy, where citizens exercise their power through electing representatives. I also learnt of the importance of this representation, as it allows citizens to be the 'watchdogs' of politics. Even after the competition ended, I continued to read and research into this area of new-found interest.

However, as I read more and more into the topic, I slowly also discovered that many young people are becoming disengaged from this democracy. Reading



about young people voting with careless, ignorant, or disillusioned attitudes greatly concerned me. How can democracy represent the people's views, when the younger portion of our population is not being truly represented? I was motivated to do something about young people's disengagement from formal politics.

But how?

As an introvert, reaching out to others and making public statements was something that I tend to avoid. So, I instead began with what I felt more comfortable doing: writing behind a computer screen. I started an **Engagement Project** on my personal blog, where I posted fortnightly on electoral voting information: a breakdown of the current disengagement issue, summaries of various political parties, the voting systems for the three levels of government etc. No face, no name, anonymously typing away with the hope that someone on the other end would read it and feel more ready to participate in formal politics.

It was easy. It was comfortable. And it felt like I was doing something.

But in reality, the reach was minimal. The internet is vast, and it was hard to find my blog articles among the sea of information out there. Looking at the dwindling number of views, I realised that it simply would not reach enough people.

So, I decided to do a little bit more. That was when I thought of the idea to run an **electoral education session** at my school. I thought that this would make tangible, local impacts in our school community. Many changes start small and local, after all.

At the same time, I was also notified of an opportunity to participate in a **Civics and Citizenship research project**, and I instantly contacted the researchers to see if I could be involved in this. As part of the project, I got the opportunity to design and conduct a research survey at our school. I then collected the data and learnt more about students' experiences with **civics and citizenship education**, and how they would like it to be taught in the future.

These two projects came together really well, as I will be implementing the data collected from the survey into the electoral education session—combining theoretical knowledge with practical action to create impact.

Other initiatives

The **Civics and Politics Education Session** is not the first instance of student initiatives at my school. Initiating an Auslan club, second-hand book drives, a **Festival of Intriguing Ideas** are some of the initiatives that my other classmates and I have been planning. In addition, Prefects and Year 12s have also started initiatives such as **Clubs Carnival**, a student newspaper, **Gratitude drives** etc. All of these initiatives have gained great support and participation from other students and have made valuable impacts on our school community.



However, this **Civics and Politics** initiative is new in the sense that **General Period** activities, assemblies, and lectures are almost always led by a teacher speaker or a guest speaker. At least, from my memory, I do not think I have ever had the experience of hearing another student giving a talk to a year level of approximately 300 students for 45 minutes.

Naturally, I am excited, but undeniably also daunted, about this civics and politics education session. *Will it go well? Will the other students enjoy it? Will I say something wrong? Would I have enough 'authority' to 'control' such a large crowd?*

There are still many anxious questions and much left to the unknown. Nonetheless, I do believe in the power of student-initiated and student-led events; there is a real sense of camaraderie and support for a fellow student to stand up, start something new, lead a change. It is certainly refreshing, potentially also empowering, to see that we, as students, have the ability to make an impact - no matter if it is big or small.

Of course, if the session turns out to be successful, my hope would be to extend it to more than just a once-off talk. Perhaps there could be an annual **Civics Awareness Week**; perhaps the opportunity to talk to younger year levels too; perhaps, even extending such sessions beyond my school, to the wider Victorian community.

But for now, one step at a time. And hopefully, one day, small voices can lead impactful changes.

Reflections

Reflecting upon my experiences, I admit that it has not been without its challenges. It is daunting to speak up, reach out, and take action. Sometimes I feel like, as a young student, I do not have enough knowledge, confidence, or expertise to create the change; sometimes, I worry that my efforts will not be successful. It certainly feels much more comfortable to settle for the *status quo* and maintain my silence.

But as author Roy T. Bennett had said, **"Change begins at the end of your comfort zone."**

If I had learnt one thing from my experiences, it would be to have the courage to step out and lead the change. You feel a much greater sense of purpose when you try to make an impact - no matter if it is big or small; no matter if it succeeds or fails. Moreover, there is more support out there than one would have originally thought: teachers, like-minded students, friends, others you meet along the way...

All that it takes is a little initiative, a little commitment, and a little courage.

Jasmine Xu

Year 11 student

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SAGA: Sexuality and Gender Alliance

We are the **SAGA group** from **Swan Hill College** and we'd like to take some time to share our group with you, which is something we are incredibly proud to have established!

The SAGA group stands for the **Sexuality and Gender Alliance**, and was established at **Swan Hill College** towards the end of 2018. This group was developed as a need was identified that involved forming a safe space that would promote acceptance and provide a sense of belonging for any individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and also include individuals wishing to be allies. This is particularly important given that Swan Hill is a regional country town with limited access to resources and support compared to metropolitan areas.

SAGA is held once a week and is open to all students and staff in attendance at Swan Hill College. We are also lucky to have external services such as **YouthInc** visit the group to offer support and resources.

Currently, the group has around 25 members, which includes students from Years 7-12 who attend regularly. This has been a positive for our group, as it means that we can include and listen to the voices of students across all year levels.

The vibe at SAGA group meetings is very laid back, but we do follow some kind of structure. We usually meet at 1pm and spend 10 minutes introducing ourselves. We start by saying our names, pronouns and something cool that has happened in the past week. Next, we discuss our decided topic for the session. This might include discussing what our next event will be (for example **Wear It Purple Day**) and then making plans about what we need to do to make that a success. Lastly, we play a quick game to ensure that our connection remains strong.

Starting

It took a while for us to create this space. When it first started it was a space where people could come and hang, however people were still on edge and not fully comfortable being vulnerable with one another.



A setback we have worked through is ensuring that every student has a voice and feels heard. This is particularly relevant for the junior students, where we must acknowledge that they are the future of our group and need to feel empowered. To ensure we do this, we dedicate specific time to each and every student so they can share any thoughts or concerns they may have. We never judge or dismiss the insights of our group members and members of SAGA know their input is valued. This means we are constantly working to develop the confidence and self-esteem of each and every member of our group. We validate concerns and offer support to one another, not just within SAGA but in the broader school community.

Additionally, like any new group, the school community did take a while to adjust to what this group means and the purpose of it. We were able to combat or address any of these uncertainties (which were mainly due to misinformation) by educating our school community about the need to create a safe, inclusive space where everyone can be accepted and respected for being their authentic self.

Best moments

Some of the best moments have been when students have felt safe enough to be themselves and have talked about some of their own personal struggles. It has been absolutely heart warming to see a group that consists of students from all different ages, personal backgrounds, personalities and walks of life band together as one, and offer one another support. This has resulted in

some students feeling safe enough to use the space to announce that they belong to the LGBTQIA+ community. For some students, this was the first place they said these words out loud and, by all accounts, it has been powerful to do this for both these students, and for their peers.

Achievements

SAGA aims to be a continually active group that works to identify any existing gaps and plans how to appropriately and successfully address them so that our school community is a safer and more accepting community.

Some of SAGA's proudest achievements to date have been:

- Hosting a school wide event of **IDAHOBIT Day** whereby there were activities and a promotion of the day and what it stands for.
- Organising a casual dress day where students and staff at the school wore a piece of purple to advocate for **Wear It Purple Day**.
- Creating a presentation that was presented to every year level at the assemblies to work on educating students about the challenges that the LGBTQIA+ community face and how they can be an ally to create positive change.
- Presenting at a staff meeting where some student members of SAGA provided education to staff – particularly around pronouns and preferred names.

Currently, SAGA are working at promoting a gender-neutral toilet with appropriate signage.

It is our hope that SAGA continues to keep growing. We are incredibly proud of all the hard work we have put in and know that, by creating and maintaining this group, we have made other students feel safer.

Thanks for reading our story!

The Swan Hill College SAGA Group

From the **VicSRC's Student Voice Hub**;
see: <https://bit.ly/3fEsZqX>

Books about self-directed learning and democratic education are like London buses: none appear for ages then they all come at once.

Does this mean that we are looking at a post-pandemic Overton Window for our ideas?

And how do we feel about 'for-profit' democratic schools?

I grew up in South London and my dad was a bus driver. There was supposed to be a number 47 to my school every three minutes but sometimes 20 minutes would go by, then five buses would arrive at the same time.

The past 15 months has been like that for books in English that criticise state education. Many go on to recommend some degree of student directed learning and curriculum choice. Some advocate a context of greater regard for student voice, democracy and respect for the rights of young people. Until about 2018, I might get one or two such books a year with an invitation to a book launch or a request for a review or a few words for the back cover. Recently I have had 21 such books sitting on my desk with one of my own adding to the pile!

Something is going on. But what?

Are people suddenly feeling generous and wanting to send presents to this old guy as he fades away into has-beenness? Unlikely. Or is a tsunami of interest in our ideas building up, precipitated by a spreading awareness that most public schools systems are just not delivering the goods economically or in terms of human flourishing? Millions of parents have seen just what uninspiring content has been sent on-line for their children to digest (or not) at home during lock-downs. Some of these will not be sending their children back to school and many more will be ignoring the school content and encouraging children to spread their interests more widely while at home.

Research in England is showing that, when free to choose their own reading material, many children are choosing harder texts than they would

meet at school, and are spending more time reading them with deeper understanding. **There seems to be a growing feeling that things should not just go back to 'more of the same' after COVID.**

Overton Window

You may be familiar with the notion of the 'Overton Window.'

An **Overton Window** is the range of policies politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time. The term is named after American policy analyst Joseph P Overton, who stated that an idea's political viability depends mainly on whether it falls within this range, rather than on politicians' individual preferences. According to Overton, the window frames the range of policies that a politician can recommend without appearing too extreme to get elected, given the climate of public opinion at that time.

These windows of opportunity open and also close as public moods swing.

Around the turn of the century, I found myself in such a moment when I became involved in developing **education for citizenship** in England. I had long argued for greater student participation in decision making in the curriculum and the day to day running of state schools. At the very least, there should be a non-tokenistic students' council in every school.

I had been working with the Council of Europe in several countries along these lines, but nothing was happening in England. Suddenly, with a new centre-left government, a new minister, and new advisers, it was possible to insert the word '**democratic**' in front of the word '**citizenship**', and to repeat over and over again the idea that teaching '**about**' democracy was a waste of time unless young people had the opportunity to '**do**' democracy.

It worked.

'**Participation in democratic decision making and responsible action**' became a part of the English national curriculum for all 14-16 year olds. Money was provided for teacher training, inspectors were appointed to ensure that it happened, and a large-scale longitudinal research project was funded. 25% of secondary schools implemented the policy with enthusiasm and general support from parents – though many did not.

The right wing press challenged the development in 2001 claiming it would undermine standards in 'important' subjects like maths. This worried some parents. The minister panicked and I was funded to research the issue.

I found evidence that, far from undermining 'standards', schools that involved large numbers, or all, of their students in school democracy actually achieved higher examination results, had better attendance and fewer exclusions for anti-social behaviour than the average for all schools in similar socio-economic environments. This became known as the '**Hannam Report**'. It is still available, and my findings were supported by a further study carried out by our **National**

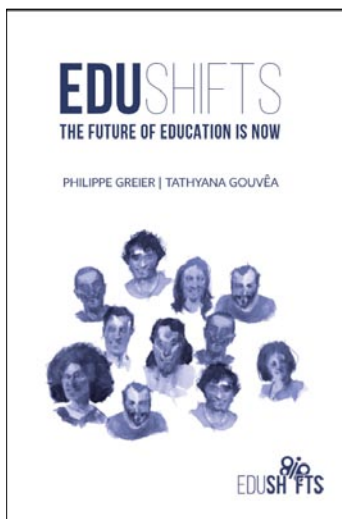
Foundation for Education Research (NFER) in 2006.

But by 2010 the public mood had shifted and a new conservative government brought these democratic developments to a stop. **The nightmare of competition between schools, obsessive testing, high levels of anxiety, and loss of well-being in students and their teachers returned.**

The **Overton Window** for school democracy had firmly closed.

Now, 12 years later, as I stare at this pile of books on my desk, I wonder if another **Overton Window** is opening. They include a spectrum of authors from those on the more creative and reflective parts of the mainstream establishment, to those who are well outside it: those who have worked within state systems as 'responsible subversives', and those who have created 'pioneers of possibility' ventures in the private sector; those whose principal focus is with learning, and those more concerned with rights. The pile does not include wonderful texts such as Peter Gray's *"Free To Learn"*, Ken Robinson's *"Creative Schools"*, Yaacov Hecht's *"Democratic Education"*, Peter Hartkamp's *"Beyond Coercive Education"* or the Sudbury Valley books - or anything by David Gribble that pre-date these recent arrivals.

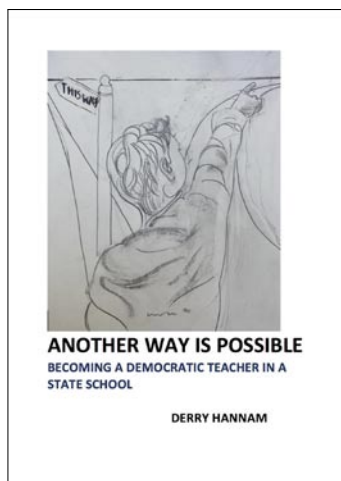
So where to start?



Well the flood started with the arrival without explanation of an extraordinary text called *"EduShifts: The Future of Education is Now"* just before Christmas 2019. I have no idea who sent it to me, and it contains no publication date or place. It should have a code number but it hasn't.

After an introduction futuristically written in 2184 by Philippe Greier (who like many Austrians probably achieved longevity from the mountain air of his childhood), the book contains a chapter 2 that consists of 20 blank pages that should, but don't, contain the handwritten thoughts of whoever sent it to me, together with an instruction to add my own ideas before I pass it on.

It is a brilliant book, which I think started its life at a conference in Brazil in 2017. Why it took so long to arrive in Seaford I don't know, but the sections by Helena Singer (Brazil), neuro-biologist Gerald Huether (Germany), José Pacheco (Portugal and Brazil) and Yaacov Hecht (Israel) all contain transformative visions of what education should and will hopefully become – pretty much what members of EUDEC would wish for. So far I have been too possessive to pass it on, as I keep re-reading parts of it.

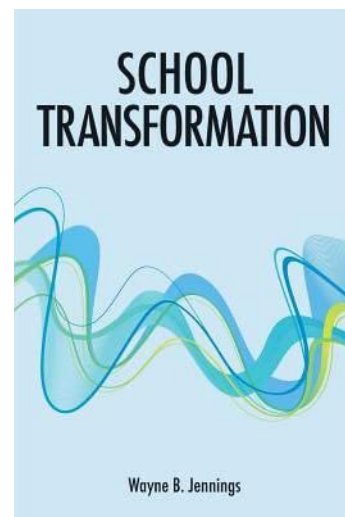


I will get my own book out of the way next. It is called *"Another Way is Possible: Becoming a Democratic Teacher in a State School."* It fits in the EUDEC frame of student directed learning in a context of democracy and human rights. As a young teacher, I tried to create an AS Neill/Summerhill inspired democratic learning community of 35 11-year olds who had just failed the high-stakes 11+ test in an English secondary school. I was kicked into finally getting it into publication as an e-book and paperback by Katy Zago and Max Sauber from ALLI ASBL (*Association Luxembourgeoise pour la liberté d'Instruction*). I am eternally grateful to Katy and Max because I have had feedback from student teachers and teachers in eight countries saying they have been encouraged by the ideas, which were lacking in their university courses.



Most closely aligned with my own book is Geraldine Rowe's *"It's Our School, It's Our Time."* She is an English educational psychologist who, for her PhD, studied examples of teachers who systematically involved children in class and school decision making.

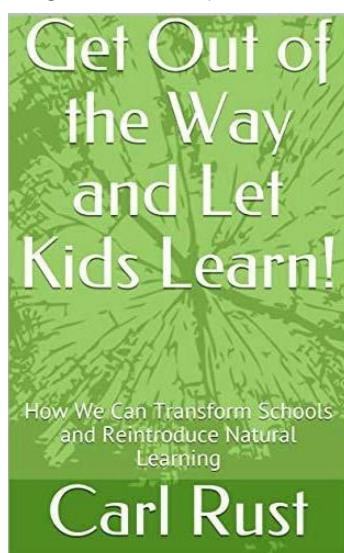
Like my book, it is aimed at helping state school teachers resist damaging academic performance pressure. The book is for those in the state system working in a gradualist fashion to enhance learning through participation, but it is nonetheless firmly committed to children's rights. It was a pleasure to be invited to attend the launch of the book and to review it.



One of the reviewers of my book then sent me his *magnum opus* from the United States. Wayne Jennings has been founder and principal of a number of influential student participative alternative charter schools in Minneapolis/St Paul, Minnesota. His book *"School Transformation"* is of biblical proportions with informative footnotes. Piecemeal reforms are not good enough, he believes. Schools that ignore human differences

cannot possibly prepare young people for uncertain futures. The book is a magnificent summary of all that we know about learning, creativity and the failure of existing school systems to foster them. It has the elegance and breadth of vision of **Peter Gray** and **Ken Robinson**, yet is relatively unknown outside the United States.

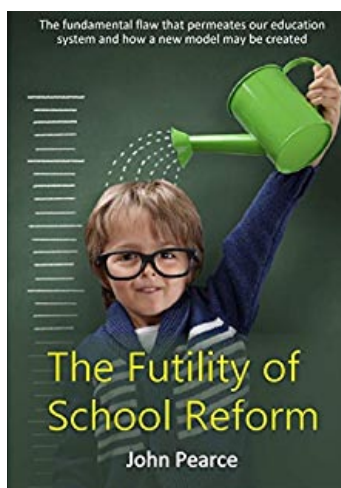
The most telling part of the book for me is his demolition of the hypocrisy of school 'mission statements.' They claim to prepare for the future workplace, but allow little autonomy, communication, collaboration, control; they claim to prepare democratic citizens, but most schools are run as dictatorships with little voice for the students or teachers; they claim to prepare for life-long learning, but all too often destroy the innate love of learning of young humans; and they claim to develop the potential of every child, but don't bother to find out what it is!! This especially resonated with my work as an English school inspector!



Days after the arrival of **Wayne Jennings** book, *"Get Out of the Way and Let Kids Learn"* by **Carl Rust** arrived from Indiana, USA. Carl sets out how we can transform schools and re-introduce natural learning. Like me he describes his own learning journey. The book is a down-to-earth practical guide for teachers in mainstream schools on how to start the process.

I was recently in a meeting with **Carl** listening to a complex theoretical exposition. At question time he asked: "So – what do we do on Monday morning?" His book contains a series of answers: Get out of the classroom. Get rid of tests. Get rid of coercion. Get rid of much teacher talk.

Get rid of one-size-fits-all curriculum. Bring in student directed learning and democratic decision making. It's a lovely book and deserves to be a best seller.

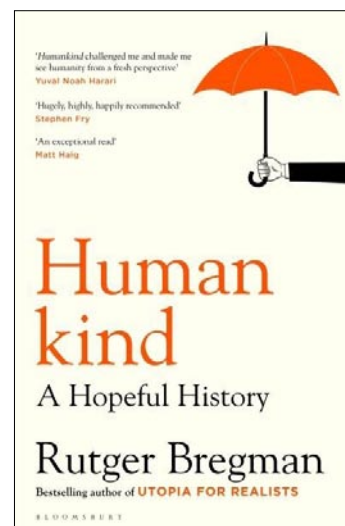


Shortly after reading my book, a retired teacher trainer wrote to me with a copy of *"The Futility of School Reform"* by **John Pearce**. It is another great read. In it he demolishes conventional subject-based curriculum, most of what passes for teaching, and school as an organisation committed to control. He believes that, through social media, young people are seeing that school is more concerned with control than learning. They are beginning to challenge much prescribed curriculum for what they see as more important and interesting areas of knowledge.

Greta Thunberg-inspired climate change movements such as *'Teach the Future'*, and rights-demanding groups such as *'Pupil Power'* in the UK, the VicSRC's *'Teach the Teacher'* programme in Victoria Australia, *'Up For Learning'* in Vermont USA, *'OBESSU'* and the national school student organisations in Europe, the global *YouthxYouth* movement, all bear witness to **John Pearce's** beliefs.

Pearce concludes with his vision of the **Optimum School**, based on community rather than hierarchy, which is liberatory rather than controlling – again just about everything that EUDEC stands for.

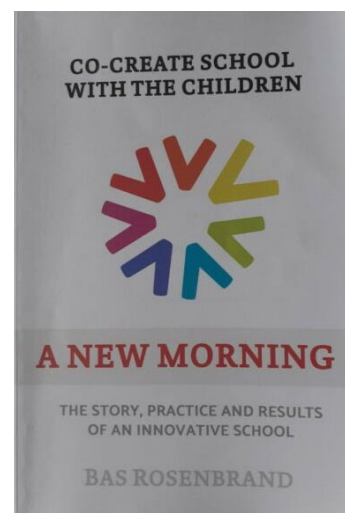
Next to the Netherlands for *"Human Kind: A Hopeful History"* by **Rutger Bregman**. **Zoe Readhead** says that sceptical visitors to Summerhill school often refer to **William Golding's** dystopian novel *"Lord of the Flies"* where a group of children stranded on an island soon forget "civilised behaviour" and



start to murder and seek power over each other. *"No, that is not how self-governing kids behave,"* says **Zoe**. I agree with her, and **Bregman** sets out why we are right, demonstrating that collaborative kindness rather than hatred is crucial to being human.

He tells a true story of children shipwrecked on an island who develop behaviours totally the reverse of **Golding's** and much more aligned to Summerhill or my own classes.

While in the Netherlands, it is worth mentioning that **Bas Rosenbrand's** beautiful book *"Co-create School with the Children: A New Morning"* has recently emerged in its third edition.



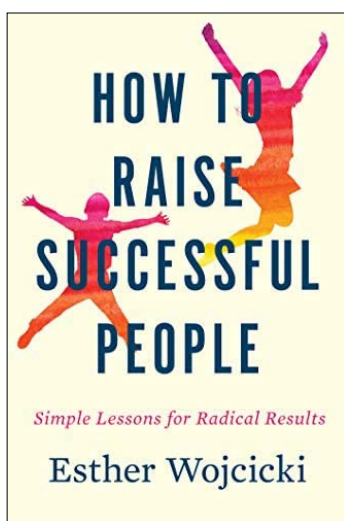
Moving east, my next book comes from Bavaria, Germany: *"Education is an Admirable Thing – Wake up Call"* by **Charles Warcup**.

Charles was one of the core group of adults behind the beautiful Ammersee Sudbury School near Munich, brutally closed by the Bavarian inspection officials despite the vocal support of parents and



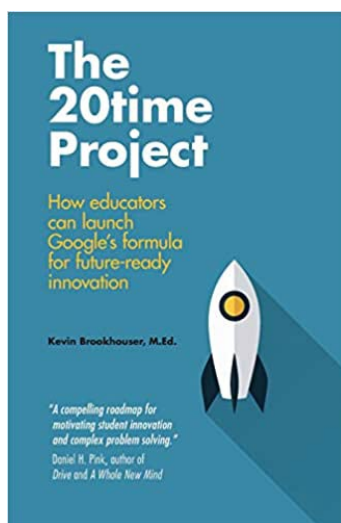
the local Burgermeister. I was invited to join their support group along with **Peter Gray**, **Peter Hartkamp**, and **Yaacov Hecht** – but we were unable to save the school. **Charles'** book is more 'inner' or 'spiritual' perhaps than the others described so far, yet he also aims to transform German schooling to one more concerned for sustainability: what he calls '*cross-pollinated learning*', with adults and young people together creating curriculum and defining what both regard as '*useful knowledge*.' Another great book that I am currently re-reading.

Back to the USA for two books that support the **20% concept** – where 20% of curriculum time in all state schools should be allocated to the interests, concerns, questions and passions of the students. Of course, in democratic schools, 20% is a ridiculously small amount of time for student directed learning, but for the majority of state schools everywhere it would be a major step forward.



Esther Wojcicki is the author of "*How To Raise Successful People*" and also

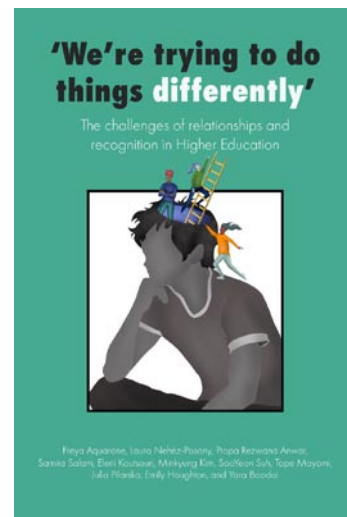
head of the media arts department at Palo Alto High School, California, where she has for many years implemented the 20% principle with her classes to amazingly good effect. Her catchword is **TRICK**: trust, respect, independence, collaboration and kindness. **Wojcicki's** book is as much about parenting as schooling, though one of her students, who is also one of her daughters, went on to join *Google*, where the 20% principle operates, to create some of the most profitable innovations for the company in her self-directed but paid time.



Kevin Brookhouser's book "*The 20time Project: How Educators can launch Google's formula for future-ready innovation*" arrived on my desk at the same time as **Wojcicki's** book. It is a 'roadmap' of how to implement the 20% principle in lessons and in whole school scheduling. It is a practical **Carl Rust**-like '*what to do on Monday morning*' kind of book. As somebody commented to me last week – when we create 20% departments in all state schools we should call them "*Passion Departments*."

Now, back to the UK for a book by **Freya Aquarone** and her students: "*We're trying to do things differently*." While working on her own PhD research into democratic approaches to learning for students aged 16 and over, **Freya** is teaching on the Kings College, London social sciences BA programme. She and her students decided to write this book together about the challenges of relationship and recognition in Higher Education.

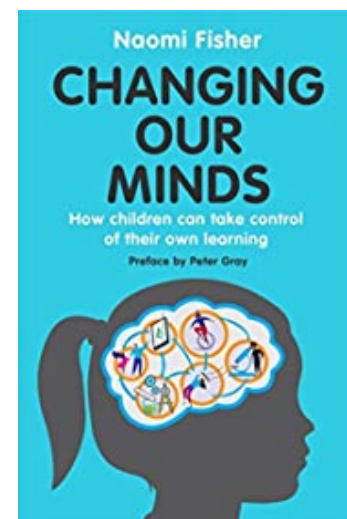
This book comes at a time when undergraduate students at universities in England amass enormous debt, for



which they get poorer and poorer value in teaching, as staff are pressed to focus on publications and grant-winning research.

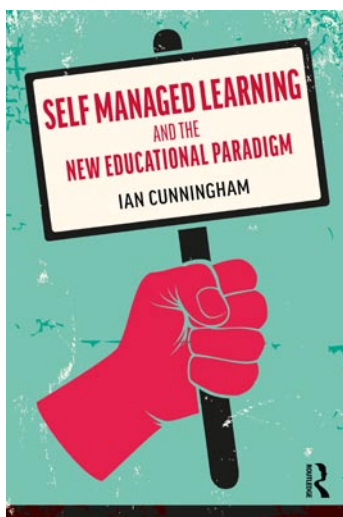
It asks questions that would be transformative if taken seriously: How to foreground democratic partnership and emotional care; how to define the role of free speech; how to turn the research lens onto the experience of undergraduate learning itself. One of the many amazing things about this book is that it is free!

Remaining in the UK with a diversion to South Africa, I come to three fine books on self-directed learning, which together constitute an extremely powerful package.



First clinical psychologist and parent **Naomi Fisher's** "*Changing Our Minds: How Children can take control of their own Learning*." Here is a magnificent compendium of knowledge around what neuro-science and psychological research have to tell us about the potential children have to organise their own learning and the almost complete failure of school systems to utilise this knowledge.

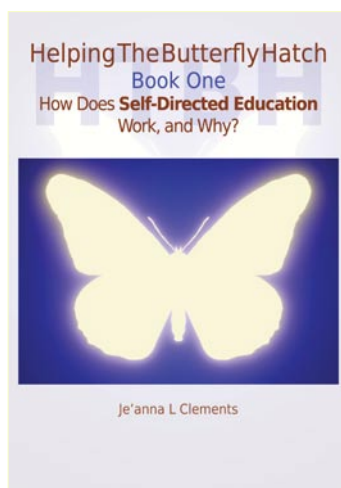
The book is a bible of guidance and re-assurance for parents considering home education and I was pleased to attend her book launch and wrote a blurb for the book. **Naomi** says that she was delighted and surprised when **Peter Gray** agreed to write a preface to her book. Well I understand her delight as Peter writes: *"We are on a trajectory with self-directed education ... I don't know when the gates will open ... but this book will help."* I am not surprised that he valued it highly and agreed to contribute to it.



The next book in the pile is **Ian Cunningham's** *"Self-Managed Learning and the New Educational Paradigm."* Ian suggests that to be qualified to comment on the failures of the current English school system, and to convincingly propose alternatives, you need to have 'skin in the game': to be a 'player.'

Since coordinating the alternative inspection of Summerhill School 20 years ago, which played a key role its defence from closure and to which I was proud to contribute, his 'skin in the game' has been the creation of a learning centre for young people in the Brighton area of South England. Ian uses the experience gained from creating self management in higher education and company training to create a 'college' of self managed learning for home educated school-aged young people. Unlike most of the other privately funded alternative educational settings in England he has no interest in becoming a school or subjecting the college to the attentions of the inspection system Ofsted – though his team have run some highly successful programmes in mainstream schools. Inspectors have arrived unannounced on several occasions and departed culture-shocked but satisfied.

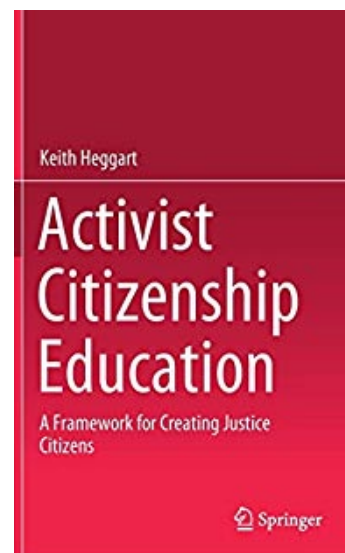
If there is a distinction to be made between 'self-managed' and 'self-directed' 'learning' or 'education', it is probably to be made around **Ian's** concept of 'learning groups' and the role of adults. As far as the young people are concerned, however, they are free to discover and pursue their own interests and goals at their own pace. This is the new education paradigm to replace existing authoritarian, coercive, prescriptive and involuntarily tested schooling.



Now to stay with the theory and practice of Self-Directed Education (SDE), I go south to South Africa to find **Je'anna Clements'** wonderful e-books on *Smashwords* (now also in paperback): *"Helping the Butterfly Hatch"* Books 1 and 2. They are quite thin, so I am counting them as one book in my pile. Book 1 is about the *what* and *why* of SDE and Book 2 covers the *how* – what support learners can usefully get from adults and each other as they engage on their learning adventures. The books are strongly rights-based and not just concerned with learning.

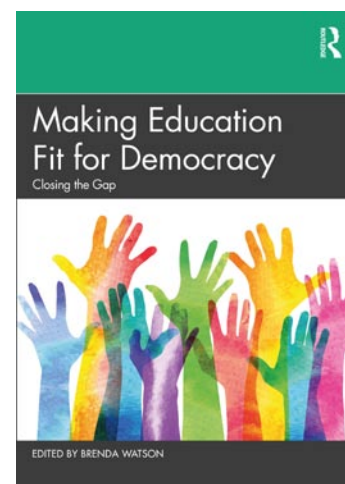
Je'anna quotes **Ken Danford** of North Star Massachusetts *'Learning is natural, School is optional'* and, as with **Ian Cunningham**, she has founded a learning community that she avoids calling a school but rather a Sudbury modelled 'Riverstone Village.' You can be captured by the creative inspiration of **Je'anna's** books by reading 20% of each free at *Smashwords* – then buy the paperbacks – production once again supported by **Katy** and **Max** at ALLI ASBE/FHREE.

Now on south to Australia for **Keith Heggart's** new *"Activist Citizenship Education: A Framework for Creating Justice Citizens."* In the noughties, I



had been involved in developments in Citizenship Education, led by ministerial adviser **Bernard Crick**, and a raft of interesting books emerged – by **John Potter** in the UK, or **James Youniss** in the USA or **Joel Westheimer** in Canada for example.

So I was delighted to be invited to **Keith Heggart's** virtual book launch, as he is firmly in the *'if you want kids to understand democracy then they have to do it in the everyday life of the school and not just listen to teachers talk about it'* tradition. The price of A\$120 is a bit of a deterrent, but I will lend my copy to anyone interested!



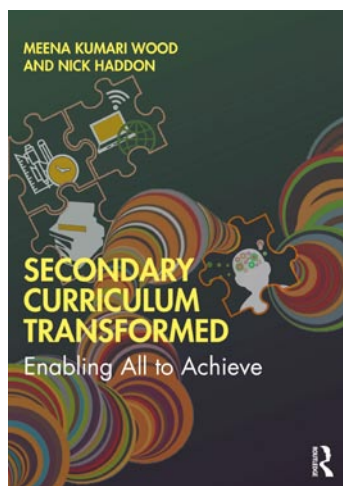
Back to the UK but staying with democracy, I recommend *"Making Education Fit for Democracy: Closing the Gap."* I couldn't work out why Routledge had sent me a review copy as, at first sight, the book looked dry and academic and I couldn't find out much about the author **Brenda Watson**. But one of the back cover blurbs was written by **Matthew Taylor** who had run the left-leaning think tank IPPR for which I have done some work. It

caught my eye so I moved the book up the 'pending' pile.

I am glad I did!

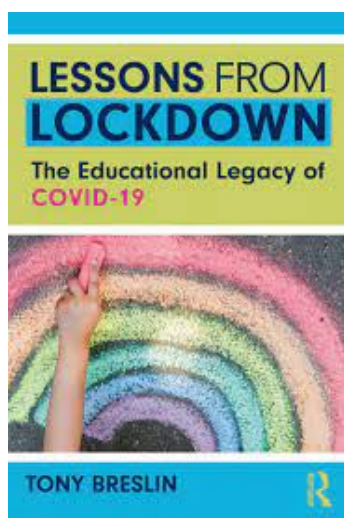
It is, in fact, one of a number of books beginning to emerge from more mainstream establishment places, which radically challenge existing systems and are beginning to speak 'our' language.

She writes: *'persons should be at the heart of education not content; ...schools should resemble well run modern libraries; ...I would like to see 'learning villages' piloted; ...self-directed learning should be encouraged...'*



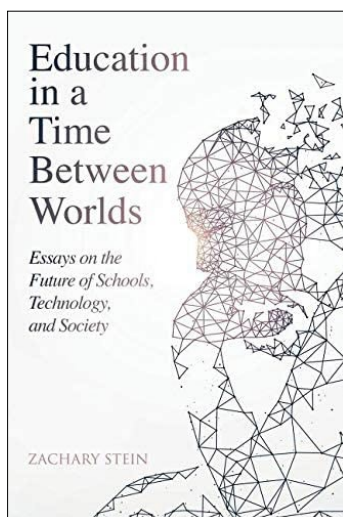
Two more books have just arrived from more mainstream sources. Retired headteacher and inspector **Meena Woods** and headteacher **Nick Haddon's** new book, *"Secondary Curriculum Transformed; Enabling All to Achieve"* seems to be moving in our direction.

Their critique of the *status quo* is powerful, though their remedies are less so – but ... they also referred to the need for some (20%?) self-directed time in all schools.



The second book of this pair is by **Tony Breslin**, one time CEO of the UK

Citizenship Foundation. His new book is almost up-to date with the title *"Lessons from Lockdown: The Educational Legacy of Covid-19."* It is based on interviews with students, teachers, parents and administrators about what has changed during the lock-downs. Once again, there are numerous references to the need for more self-directed learning and listening to student voice to avoid a post COVID return to the same old prescribed regime of narrow academic content and endless testing.

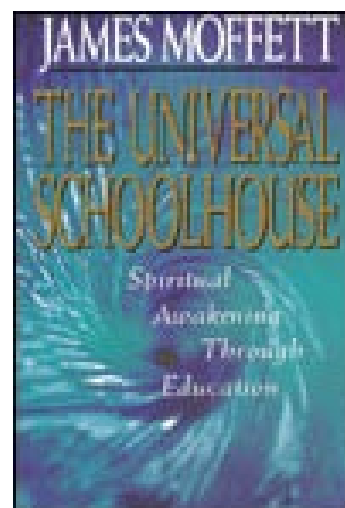


The last book in the pile, and perhaps the most provocative, is **Zachary Stein's** *"Education in a Time Between Worlds; Essays on the Future of Schools, Technology and Society."* I am reading it alongside **James Moffett's** 25 year-old *"The Universal Schoolhouse."*

Stein sees civilisation, as predicted by **Moffett**, as being in a state of collapse, but now at a planetary level for the first time. He is very aware of the contribution of climate change, and that exploitative late capitalism, whether of the US, European or Chinese variety, is finally running up against a world of finite resources. He sees the old institutions such as education systems as being beyond reform. If we are fortunate, empathetic and smart enough, we can avoid accelerating inequality, war and extinction, to create abundance in education, energy and everything else.

He envisages the new emerging from the fringes of the old: a new combination of locally-grounded but globally-interconnected learning hubs instead of schools, where self-directed education in democratic and rights-respecting contexts can be freely available to all. Not dissimilar to **Moffett's** universal schoolhouse. In fact

I am surprised that **Moffett's** book does not appear in **Stein's** bibliography.



In many respects, this vision reflects that of the English Community Education movement of which I was a part in the 1980s and about which I am now writing a book. We envisaged our schools becoming community learning centres, where town and school would become a seamless opportunity for each to be a resource for the other. **Yaacov Hecht's** Education Cities develop the idea. Many of **Stein's** themes link to the ideas that I was struggling to express in my keynotes at the Crete and Kiev EUDEC conferences, where I argued that self-directed democratic education would be crucial preparation for a world where individual lives could no longer find their purpose and identity in careers of full-time paid employment.

Stein gives this kind of thinking a coherence that I lacked, setting out 'thirteen social miracles for Educational abundance.' These include some that I referred to, such as universal basic income, and some that I did not, such as world disarmament and mutual recognition of shared humanity to replace extremism in the world's religions - a rediscovery of the 'perennial philosophy' popularised by **Aldous Huxley** and central to **Moffett's** thinking.

So that's it!! That's my pile of books and I hope you will give some of them a try. Perhaps collectively they do indicate an **Overton Window**, allowing education policy to move towards the paradigm shift that we are all working for.

Encouraged and concerned

I would like to close by sharing a connected issue. Despite bad news from France, in England two seriously radical state schools, like the AGORA schools in the Netherlands, and at least six new democratic private ventures, have emerged recently. I am also very

encouraged by the EUDEC Erasmus Project that **Magi** from Bulgaria has invited me to join along with **Yaacov Hecht**, bringing together democratic schools and state primary schools in Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy and Spain. I have long believed that dialogue between 'pioneer of possibility' private democratic schools and state schools is the way forward for the benefit of all young people and not just those from richer families.

So am I right to be concerned by the emergence of the Acton Academies - a chain of for-profit franchised schools, featuring self-directed learning and a degree of democratic decision making? The first outside the USA is now running in Ottawa, Canada, and the first in Europe is being set up in Guildford, England - scheduled to open in September. Its owners presently run expensive elitist conventional private schools.

If you join the Acton franchise and pay a fairly substantial fee, you gain access to the brand, learning materials, promotional literature and videos, and handbooks to use to set up your school and train your teachers. You are then expected to return a proportion of your fee income to Acton Centre in exchange for which you gain access to a community of practice.

The first Acton Academy was set up for the best possible reason – by parents who were unhappy with what they saw on offer to their children from the public schools of Texas. These parents just happened to be from business school backgrounds, who also saw an **Overton Window** opening: a gap in the market.

I would probably be pleased for my grandchildren to attend an Acton Academy and anyway ... Summerhill, Sands, Sudbury Valley, Netzwerk, L'Ecole Dynamique all charge fees ... so what's the problem? Why do I have this niggling fear of 'for-profit' as the motive for starting and franchising a democratic model? Am I right to fear that, though self-directed and even democratic and rights-respecting, this for-profit franchised model will keep fees high and ensure that the entitlement of all children to a creative school experience moves further and further towards the impossible with enhanced social division and inequality as a result?

Is this approach part of the problem rather than the way forward: democratic, self-directed creative schools for the wealthy few and coercive day prisons for the rest?

Or am I just an un-reconstructed lefty who needs a bit more Deweyan pragmatism in his mindset?

Derry Hannam
derry.hannam245@gmail.com

THE BOOKS IN THE PILE

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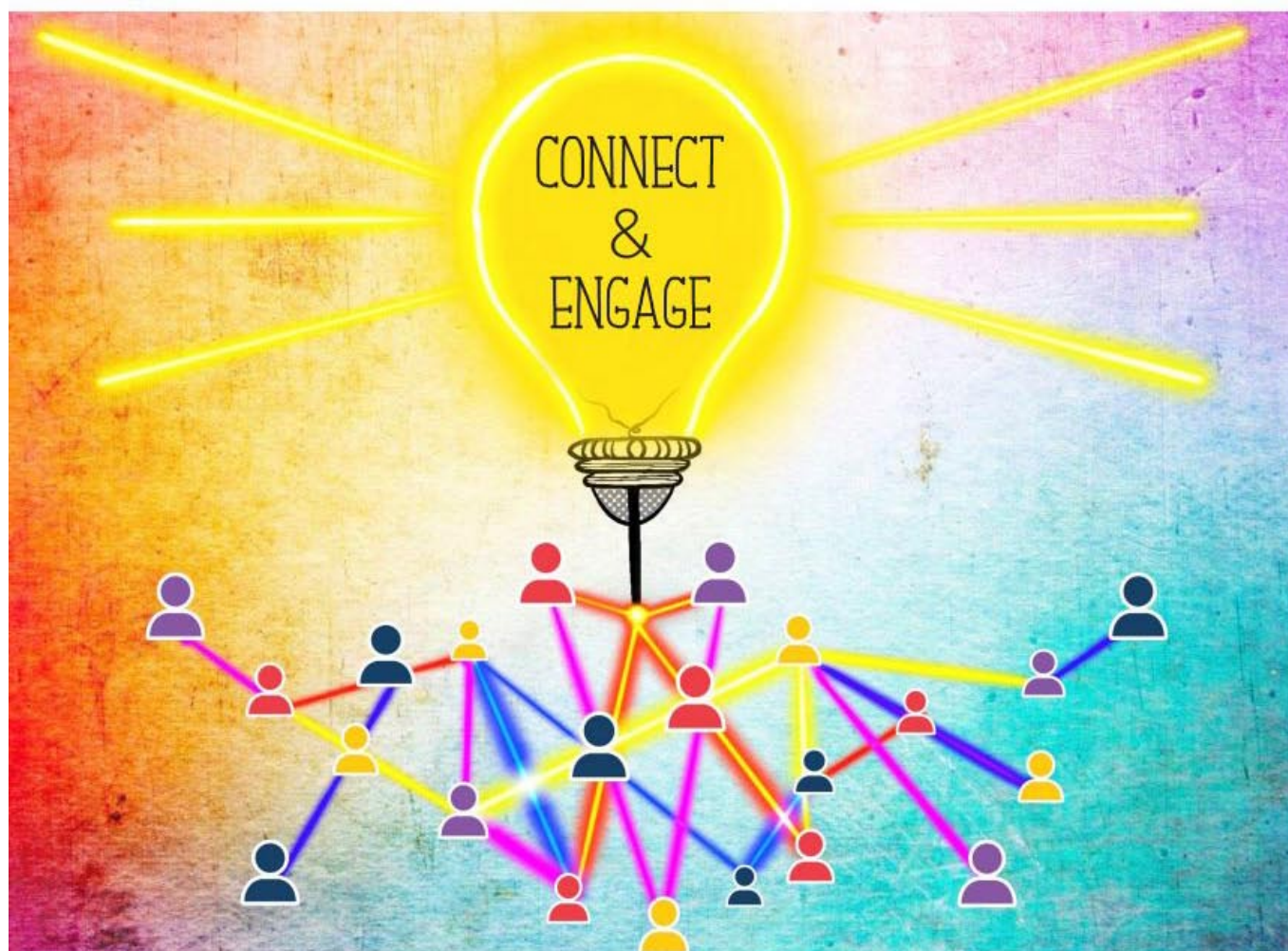
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Festival of IDEAS



Student Voice Event of the Year

Speak up and **take action** to make schools a positive place!

3 September, 2021

The Edge, State Library of Queensland | 8:30am registration. Finish at 4:00pm



Are you in Years 7 to 12?

Register here:

student-voice.bne.catholic.edu.au



International Student Voice Summit recordings available



We had an amazing time together at the on-line Summit on June 24-25! Thanks to all the young people who worked so hard to plan and implement this event and the adult allies who assisted!

The full agenda and the recordings of the large group presentations are now available at <https://bit.ly/3iN9rRQ>

If you attended the Summit, you will receive updates of what we have planned throughout the year! And... you won't miss the 2022 Virtual International Student Summit!

If you attended the Summit live, we would greatly appreciate you completing the 2021 International Summit on Student Voice Evaluation: <https://bit.ly/3zIH10K>

Thanks to all our great partners and our sponsors: *Pathway 2 Tomorrow* and *Iowa Student Learning Institute*!

If you have any questions or wish to contribute to next year's Summit planning, please contact IntlStudentVoiceSummit@gmail.com

Thanks for all you do to promote authentic student voice in whatever role you are in!

Kay A. Augustine, Ed.D.

Adult Coordinator

IntlStudentVoiceSummit@gmail.com





VicSRC Congress: Update

VicSRC Congress is back for a 16th year! Join secondary students from across Victoria on-line via **Zoom** on **Wednesday 22 September** to design solutions to the top issues in the education system, as voted by students.

Hear from the **Minister for Youth**, discuss the results of the **Congress Survey**, connect with passionate students from all over the state and lead the change in your education system.

For full event details, including COVID-19 provisions, head to the VicSRC website: <https://www.vicsrc.org.au/>

Congress is VicSRC's flagship student-led experience, which brings together secondary students from across Victoria to design solutions to the top issues in the education system, as voted by students. These issues and solutions become VicSRC's advocacy platform for the next 12 months, spearheaded by the **VicSRC Student Executive Advisory Committee**.

Have your say

Got an issue with our education system? Students in Victoria have been defining issues through the **Congress Survey**, which has been open online from 12th July! Survey responses are due to close at 5pm on **Friday 13 August 2021**, but may be extended.

Congress 2021- rescheduled!

Congress will now be held on-line via **Zoom**, on **Wednesday 22nd September**. Students will discuss and vote on the top issues identified by students, and design solutions that the VicSRC will take to decision-makers. **Tickets are now available.**

Advocacy Priorities

Then join us to launch the **Advocacy Priorities** from **Congress 2021** and celebrate a year of student voice at the **Student Voice Extravaganza** on **Thursday 2 December**.

Tickets are on sale right now

- This is your chance to **#LeadTheChange** and design solutions to the biggest issues in education in Victoria.
- Tickets can be yours right here: <https://buff.ly/3BEUr0R>
- Still not sure what **Congress** is all about? Grab more details on our website: <https://buff.ly/3eavLmT>



Congress program

Congress 2021 will run on-line with details to be confirmed. It will involve:

- **Kick off:** Hear from the 2020–2021 Student Executive Advisory Committee about what they have been working on over the last year and from the Victorian Minister for Youth.
- **Survey Results:** Explore what Victorian students are saying the biggest issues in Victorian education are right now.
- **Vote:** on the top 10 priority issues.
- **Action Teams:** Work with a team of Victorian students to look at three of the top 10 issues and work out how you want to see them fixed.
- **Closing:** Wrap up the day ready to lead the change back at your school!

HOW DOES CONGRESS MAKE CHANGE?

STEP ONE

Victorian students voice their issues with school and the education system.



STEP TWO

Students at Congress work together to design solutions to the top issues, as voted by students.



STEP FOUR

VicSRC works with education decision-makers to put these plans into action and push for student-led change.



STEP THREE

VicSRC Student Executive Advisory Committee and Ambassadors develop Action Plans for these issues, using the solutions from Congress.



STEP FIVE

Change happens! It might take more than a year, and it might look a bit different to the original plan, but slowly and surely, students shape the education system.

Meet Keisha!

Keisha is the VicSRC's new *Teach the Teacher* Programs Officer, who joined us during the latest lockdown.

Designed by students, VicSRC's *Teach the Teacher Program* is a whole school student-led framework to encourage and enable student voice, agency and leadership. *Teach the Teacher* supports students to drive change at school by leading collaborative conversations with teachers, school leadership and staff.

An entirely virtual program is now available to schools in other states. The VicSRC is excited to continue to develop this hybrid program with further feedback from participating students and teachers.

For more information visit the VicSRC website:

<https://www.vicsrc.org.au/teach-the-teacher>



Keep an eye out for Keisha's exploits when we head back to the office and *Teach the Teacher* heads back to schools.

How schools can improve student wellbeing

Returning to school is a blessing for some, a curse for others. Victoria's fifth round of remote learning has only made the conversation around youth mental health more urgent. As a VCE student who has spent the past two years in intense and irregular lockdowns, I have seen first-hand the impact on young people's mental health.

The **Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC)** declared a youth mental health crisis earlier this year. Students are calling for more support with their mental health despite the changes already made by the Department of Education and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

We know that our mental health system is broken. The recent Royal Commission showed us that young people are being let down, particularly those living in rural areas. Changes are coming, but it might not be enough to save those who are currently struggling.

VicSRC's **student mental health support pledge** calls for schools to be proactive and put students' mental health first. Students are struggling and schools have a duty of care and a responsibility to support us.

Schools that sign the pledge will be accountable to their students, with their name and the requests they have committed to, displayed on the VicSRC website. We need to change the narrative that schools are purely for academics because they aren't.

I can attest to the major mental health crisis firsthand. I am struggling with mental health issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. My normal support network of school and work have been taken away, and the uncertainty of

when another lockdown will happen causes huge anxiety. The mental health system has become even harder to navigate. Earlier this year, a very close friend of mine attempted suicide and was hospitalised. It was a lot to handle, and, without my normal support network around me, I didn't know what to do.

VCE is hard and students are burning out. Study designs are packed with more content than can fit into a 35-week period but calls to change this have fallen upon deaf ears. Cuts to the study design shouldn't be a "luxury" or a consequence of spending the majority of the year in lockdown.

As someone who sat a year 12 subject last year, we were still racing to finish, even with a two-week delay in exams and less content to cover. Right now, it doesn't feel like I'll cover all the content for exams and that's extremely stressful. Despite this sentiment being echoed by students all around the state, nothing is being changed and that's extremely disappointing.

I am calling for all students across the state to urge their school to sign this pledge, if not for yourself, then for your peers.

We are all in this together, but we need help to get there.

Claire Lock

Claire Lock (she/they) is a Year 12 student in Victoria's Alpine region and is a 2020/2021 member of Victorian Student Representative Council Executive Advisory Committee.



Mental Health Pledge in the news

You've probably seen us talking about the current student mental health crisis this year, and a few weeks ago members of our **Executive Committee** had a chance to discuss it with **Minister for Education, James Merlino**.

Most of the actions students suggested are out of the hands of DET, which is why we've launched our **Mental Health Pledge**, asking individual schools to commit to as many asks as they can. To check

out the asks and see who's signed the pledge have a look right here: <https://vicsrc.org.au/pledge>

The conversation has spilled over into traditional media as well; you might have seen **Linh** and **Grace** from

the Executive Committee in *The Age* (<https://bit.ly/37fZW8o>) talking about mental health days for students or **Claire's** opinion piece (above) on *How schools can improve student wellbeing*.

After the meeting, Minister Merlino announced that they would re-introduce the special consideration provisions for senior secondary students. We hope that some of the other recommendations will be taken on board too!

Student mental health support pledge

It's no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a huge struggle for students and educators. The uncertainty of moving between remote and face-to-face learning, the stress, the isolation, have all taken their toll.

Earlier this year, VicSRC declared a mental health crisis for students - and we're well aware it extends beyond young people to affect everyone in schools and the wider education system.

As we work together to get through the ongoing pandemic and the aftermath of last year's extended lockdown students have told us what they need.

We ask schools to take the Student Mental Health Support Pledge.

To sign the pledge, simply fill in the form that can be found at:

<https://www.vicsrc.org.au/pledge>

Schools who have signed the pledge will be displayed so that their students know they are being heard and supported.

We know that not all of the commitments are feasible for all schools, which is why it's possible to select some commitments and leave other unchecked. However we encourage all schools to make the most commitments they can.

Take the pledge ↓

We pledge to

- ☐ Not pressure VCE students to attend more than the 50 contact hours per unit identified by VCAA as required.
- ☐ Only schedule SACs within class time.
- ☐ Coordinate SAC scheduling across the whole school to make sure the workload is manageable and does not cause unnecessary stress.
- ☐ Give students up to two "no-questions asked" mental health days per term as approved absence days.
- ☐ Make sure school holidays are a rest for not only students but also teachers, principals and families, with a break from work and study.



Photo: Chris Hopkins, from the article in The Age, July 25, 2021

Meet the candidates for VicSRC's Student Executive Advisory Committee 2021-22!

<https://www.vicsrc.org.au/about/executive-committee/candidates>

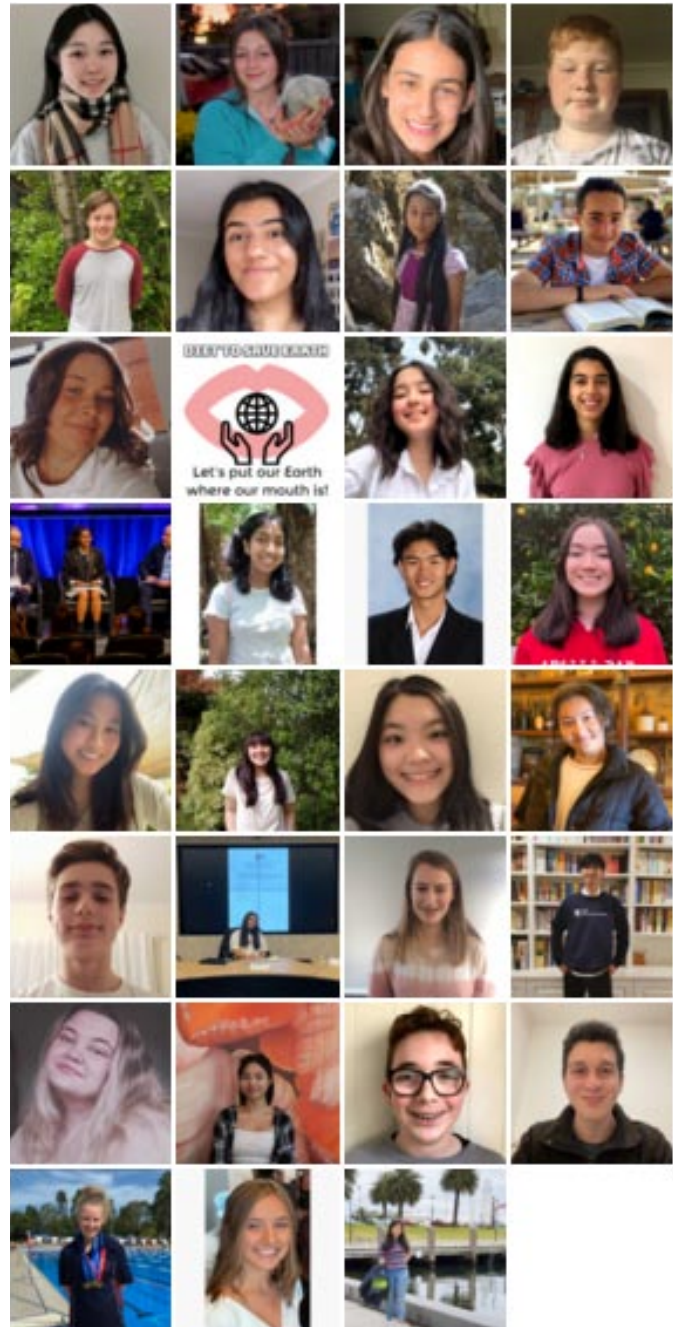
Information about the students who have nominated to represent Victorian students as part of the VicSRC's Executive Committee 2021-22 is available at: <https://bit.ly/3rYqxAr>
The Executive Committee members are elected by other school-aged students in Victoria!

Here's how voting occurs for your representatives:

1. Students who had **signed up** to the **Student Community** before **Wednesday 4 August 2021** received an e-mail on **Thursday 5 August 2021**, with a link to register to vote. Make sure you click that link! Didn't get an e-mail? Be sure to check your junk mail just in case, or e-mail us at election@vicsrc.org.au
2. **Read up** on all the candidates at the link above!
3. **Vote!!** Voting opened on **Monday 9 August 2021**, and student members of the Student Community received an e-mail with instructions on how to vote.
4. Remember to carefully consider who **you** believe would form the most motivated and diverse team; your input really matters!

At the link above, click on the images to read each candidate's answers to the following three questions:

- *Why would you be an amazing representative for students?*
- *What issue would you want to work on from the priorities from Congress 2020?*
- *What do you think is the most important issue in the education system right now?*



Are you a school student in Victoria?

Become a member of the VicSRC Student Community!

FREE for Victorian school students!

As a member of the VicSRC Student Community, you get **discounts** and links to **news** and **resources**.

You belong to a **statewide network**, and vote to **choose the VicSRC Executive**

Join @ <https://bit.ly/2FDrg5m>

Vic SRC Partner SCHOOLS

We don't make change alone

All across Victoria, schools are taking the next steps on their individual student voice journeys, but you don't have to do it alone. **VicSRC Partner Schools** are part of a network of schools across Victoria that are working hard to empower students as partners in learning through voice, agency and leadership.

Step up, spark change

Student voice, agency and leadership has been a priority in the Education State since 2015 and the **VicSRC Partner Schools** program supports students, teachers and leadership to take it to the next level.

Join the roar of student voice

We are calling on schools around Victoria to join the growing movement, to foster a culture where the biggest stakeholders in education can lead us to education that is relevant, flexible and inclusive.

Your student voice journey

As a **VicSRC Partner School**, you are not only part of Victoria's student-led education revolution, but you can also access:

- A **30 minute phone consultation** with the **VicSRC CEO** to discuss next steps to increase student voice, agency and leadership at your school.
- A **discount on bespoke training** for your school.
- **Free yearly face-to-face catch ups** in each of the four regions.
- **Online teacher forums** each term to discuss challenges and opportunities.
- **Monthly e-mail update** with VicSRC news, resources and opportunities in student voice, agency and leadership.
- **Early bird access to VicSRC events** for students.

Join

Join now at: <https://join.vicsrc.org.au/schools> and we'll send you an invoice for your first annual fee (\$150 + GST). Once payment has been received, you will receive information on how to book in your phone consultation and you'll be added to our mailing list for the monthly updates.

*"The **Student Voice Hub** is a place where teachers, students and principals can all come together to collaborate, get resources and talk to people and know what's happening in other schools around the state in regards to student voice."*



The **Student Voice Hub**

is designed **by** young people **for** young people!

It is a place for students, teachers and everyone who is passionate about the opinions and ideas of young people. It:

- Showcases examples of best practice through case studies
- Connects schools and organisations passionate about students taking action to improve their schooling experience
- Provides a safe space for stakeholders to discuss issues that matter to them
- Provides resources that support students, teachers and school leaders to take action within their classroom, school and organisation.

Student Membership is Free!

Student members contribute to blogs, forums and polls, as well as access many great resources. Students shape the future of the **Student Voice Hub**; be part of our community to have a voice and create positive change.

We are working hard to make this a safe and inclusive environment for everyone. Currently under Australian privacy laws we require parental/guardian permission for people under 15 to register.

<https://studentvoicehub.org.au/>

The **Student Voice Hub** was developed by **VicSRC** with support from the Victorian Department of Education and Training.



To sign up to the VicSRC online e-newsletter ... visit:

<http://www.vicsrc.org.au/>

VicSRC Victorian Student Representative Council

VicSRC Ltd receives funding support from the **Victorian Department of Education and Training**.

It can be reached on **0411 679 050** or by e-mail: info@vicsrc.org.au

News and Resources

Make Change Happen

The **Make Change Happen** resources for active citizenship have been produced by **Social Education Victoria (SEV)** with funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Training's Strategic Partnerships Program. They are relevant to any teachers interested in active citizenship or running change projects with students.

The **Make Change Happen Project** is an opportunity to work on a student-led change project in your school, local community or even globally. It encourages students to be active and informed citizens and addresses the need for support for this in schools.

Make Change Happen projects can be implemented as part of a student-centred **Civics and Citizenship** curriculum or as an extracurricular project ie within subject time or as a lunchtime or after-school activity. Check out the resources to find out how:

<https://makechangehappen.com.au/>

Students will explore their community and develop a plan for a change they would like to make. They then develop and document a project that helps to effect this change. The scope of the project can be as large or small as the students determine in their research. SEV personnel are available to assist with this project.



These teaching resources for matched to the **Victorian Curriculum for Civics and Citizenship**. Well-implemented civic action projects also address some of the **general capabilities** such as *interpersonal learning* and *critical and creative thinking*, and in some cases *ethical understanding*, depending on the project students choose.

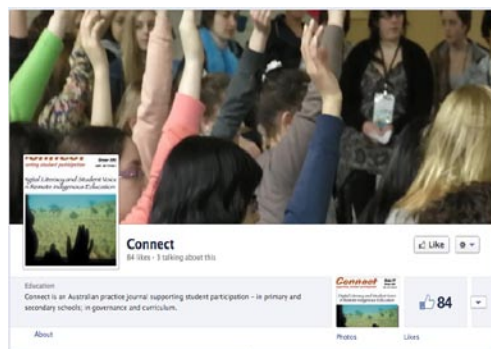
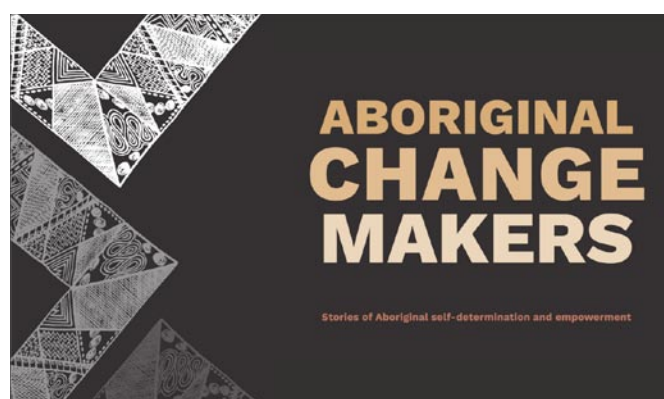
Get in touch with **Social Education Victoria (SEV)** at admin@sev.asn.au for additional support with **Civics and Citizenship** for Victorian teachers.

Aboriginal Change Makers

Aboriginal Change Makers is a teaching resource for Victorian schools that presents amazing stories of political and social activity, self-determination, and empowerment, as well as the struggle for recognition in the face of another more dominant and colonising society.

This resource has been produced through a collaboration between **Worawa Aboriginal College** and the **Parliament of Victoria**. It is available to view online or download as a free eBook:

<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/education>



Connect on facebook

Connect has a presence on *facebook*. Find us at:

<https://ow.ly/L6UvW>

We've been posting some news and links there since June 2013, to complement and extend what you see in the online version of **Connect**. It would be great if you could go there and 'like' us, and also watch there for news of each **Connect's** availability online - for FREE.



Free Civics and Citizenship professional learning program in Victoria

Register now for a free short course to enhance teacher capacity in implementing **Victorian Curriculum Civics and Citizenship Levels 3–10**. The VCAA is pleased to be conducting the course in collaboration with Monash University and Australian Catholic University.

The course is open to Victorian primary and secondary school teachers from government, Catholic and independent schools. Teams of teachers from the same school are encouraged

to participate. Participants will have the option of either completing the eight modules of this course entirely online or via blended learning.

Participants will complete the following 8 modules

Modules 1–4: Civics and Citizenship content knowledge	Modules 5–8: Pedagogical and applied knowledge and skills
Module 1: Foundations of Australian Government and Democracy	Module 5: Co-constructing Knowledge and Meaning
Module 2: Laws and Citizens in Australia	Module 6: Student Voice and Agency for Engaged Citizenship
Module 3: Representation and Australian Democracy	Module 7: Critical Learning for Active Citizenship
Module 4: Citizenship, Diversity and Identity	Module 8: Teaching Contemporary Issues for Global Citizenship

One day of CRT is provided for every participant, which will be payable to the school upon the teacher's completion of the program. Travel costs of regional teachers attending face-to-face workshops may be reimbursed on application. At the end of the program, participants will be awarded a Digital Badge as a record of their achievement.

Course dates: **6 September to 15 October 2021** (10 hours' total time commitment); course places are strictly limited.

For more information visit the VCAA web page: <https://bit.ly/370w6ED>



*All about Student Action Teams,
including some hyperlinked mini-case studies, at:
www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams*

Student Voice Research and Practice facebook group
www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/

*This open **facebook** group was initially established by Professor Dana Mitra, and is now supported by the work of academics, practitioners and students throughout the world. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in the area of 'Student Voice' - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere – as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.*





YOUTH FOR PEACE AWARD



* Are you aged **16-24 years**, or do you work with young people aged 16-24?

We are inviting teams of **young people** to create a media campaign to inspire more action on the **climate crisis** from a specific audience.

First Prize - **\$1500**; highly commended prizes - **\$750!**

CLOSING DATE:
30 SEPT 2021

Find out more at <https://bit.ly/3v5RNgX>

'Student Councils and Beyond' Online! FREE!

We've almost run out of print copies of the first *Connect* publication: ***Student Councils and Beyond*** (from 2005). And many of the ideas have subsequently been reflected in the *Represent!* kit from the VicSRC (see: www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/represent).

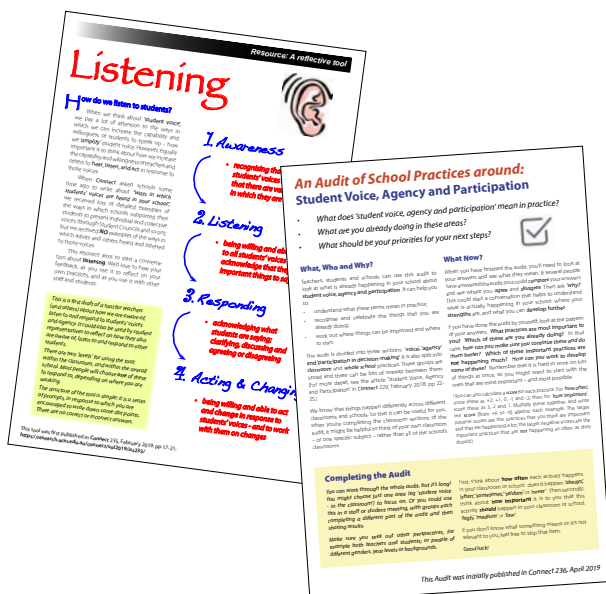
So we have made all of ***Student Councils and Beyond*** (a compilation of articles and resources from many earlier issues of *Connect*) available online for **FREE**. It can be downloaded (as one document or in sections) as PDFs from the *Connect* website. Find it at:

www.asprinworld.com/connect

Audits of Practice

The Audits and Tools that have been developed over the last couple of years, and published in *Connect*, are now available online as PDFs from the *Connect* website: <https://bit.ly/2XVfjh1>

You can download these to use with teacher or student groups.



Student Voice, Agency, Participation: <https://bit.ly/2DhMpht>

This original document that outlined concepts of 'voice', 'agency' and 'participation' was initially published in *Connect* 229, February 2018.

Listening Tool: <https://bit.ly/2rwBnTe>

This reflective tool is about being aware of, listening to, responding to and acting on students' voices. It can be used by teachers or by student representatives. It was originally published in *Connect* 235, February 2019.

Audit of School Practices: <https://bit.ly/2KWjnYZ>

The Audit provides a comprehensive and structured overview of practices around voice, agency and participation at classroom and whole-school levels. It can be used to discuss what you are already doing and what further possibilities exist - and to determine your priorities. It was originally published in *Connect* 236, April 2019.

Student Council Audit: <https://bit.ly/2DhMjX9>

A similar Audit looks specifically at how well your Student Council is operating. It is based on an earlier Audit in the VicSRC's *Represent!* kit, and this version was originally published in *Connect* 237, June 2019.

Connect Publications: Order Form

Tax Invoice: ABN: 98 174 663 341

To: **Connect**, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote VIC 3070 Australia
e-mail: r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au



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... copies	<i>Reaching High</i> (with DVD) \$	\$30	\$25*	\$
... copies	<i>Reaching High</i> (without DVD)	\$20	\$15*	\$
... copies	<i>Switched On to Learning</i> (maximum of 10 copies per order)	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$
... copies	<i>Democracy Starts Here</i>	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$

Publications available from Connect:

		normal price	Connect subscriber price	
... copies	<i>Foxfire 25 Years</i>	\$20	\$10*	\$
... copies	<i>Sometimes a Shining Moment</i> (1 available) \$	\$20	\$10*	\$
... copies	<i>A Foxfire Christmas</i> (1 available) \$	\$20	\$10*	\$
... copies	<i>Foxfire 9</i> (1 available) \$	\$10	\$ 5*	\$
... copies	<i>Students and Work</i> (maximum of 10 copies per order)	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$
... copies	<i>SRC Pamphlets Set</i> (2 sets available) \$	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$

(\$ check availability before ordering; * discounted rate for subscribers to **Connect**)

B: Total for publications: \$.....

NOTE: all amounts include postage/packaging within Australia (GST not applicable - input taxed)

(Postage: *Outside Australia* add \$5 per copy of publications \$.....)

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Connections

Contribute to Connect

Anyone may submit an original article to be considered for publication in *Connect* provided he or she owns the copyright to the work being submitted or is authorised by the copyright owner or owners to submit the article. Authors are the initial owners of the copyrights to their works, but by successfully submitting the article to *Connect*, transfer such ownership of the *published* article to *Connect* on the understanding that any royalties or other income from that article will be used to maintain publication of *Connect*.



ASPRINworld: the Connect website!

www.asprinworld.com/connect

Connect has a website at *ASPRINworld*. The *Connect* section of the website is slowly growing, with information about subscribing, index of recent back issue contents (hyperlinked to PDFs) and summaries of and order information for *Student Councils and Beyond*, *Student Action Teams*, *Reaching High* and *Switched On to Learning*.

**Connect is also archived
and available electronically:**

research.acer.edu.au/connect

All issues of *Connect* are archived through the ACER Research Repository: *ACEReSearch*. *Connect* issues from #1 to the current issue are available for **free** download, and recent issues can be searched by key terms. See the *ASPRINworld* site for index details of recent issues, then link to and download the whole issue you are interested in.

www.informit.com.au

In addition, current and recent issues of *Connect* are now available on-line to libraries and others who subscribe to RMIT's *Informit* site – a site that contains databases of many Australian publications. You can access whole issues of *Connect* as well as individual articles. Costs apply, either by a library subscription to *Informit*'s databases, or through individual payments per view for articles.



Articles from *Connect* are also discoverable through *EBSCOhost* research databases.

Local and International Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us and we'll work something out.

Australian:

ACER Discover (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) May, June, July 2021

A Guide to Establishing a Children and Young People's Advisory Group (Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People, Strawberry Hills, NSW) June 2021 - at <https://bit.ly/3xiYugf>

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience: Education for Young People (AIDR, East Melbourne, Vic) July 2021

Students as Partners Network Update (University of Queensland, Qld) May 2021

VicSRC Update (VicSRC, North Melbourne, Vic) May, June, July 2021

International:

Phoenix Education News (Phoenix Education, UK) June 2021

UP for Learning (Vermont, USA) June, July 2021



www.asprinworld.com/connect
&
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41+ years
1979 to 2021 ...
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Connect Online!

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Catalogue:
see page 44

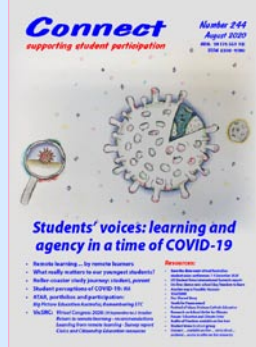
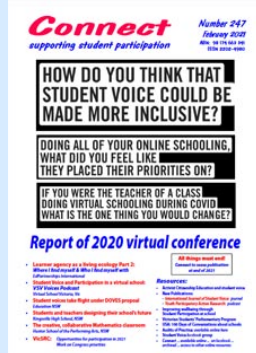
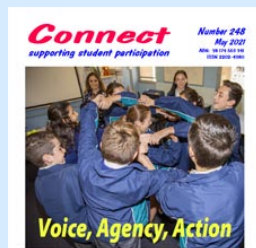
All issues of **Connect** from #1 in 1979 to the present (that's almost **42 years!**) are freely available online! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all the issues of **Connect** have been scanned or uploaded into the ACER's Research Repository: **ACEReSearch**.

You can find these issues of **Connect** at:

<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect>

The left-hand menu provides a pull-down menu for you to select the issue number > **browse**; the front cover of the issue is displayed, and you can simply click on the link in the main body of the page to download a PDF of the issue. Recent issues are also **searchable** by key words.

Connect has a commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation. We are totally supported by donations!



Let us know

There may be some gaps or improvements necessary. As you use this resource, let us know what you find. (If an issue of **Connect** seems to be missing, check the issues either side, as **double issues** show up only as one issue number.) If you have any ideas for improving this resource, please let us know.

Most importantly, please USE this resource.

All copies of *Connect* are available online ... for free!

<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect>

